

Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Delta Health Alliance, Inc (U215N120032)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Need for Project		
1. Selection Criteria 1	15	14
Quality of Project Design		
1. Selection Criteria 2	25	25
Quality of Project Services		
1. Selection Criteria 3	15	11
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Selection Criteria 4	45	39
Sub Total	100	89
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Comprehensive Local Early Learning Network		
1. CPP 4	2	2
Sub Total	2	2
Competitive Preference Priority		
Quality Internet Connectivity		
1. CPP 5	1	
Arts and Humanities		
1. CPP 6	1	1
Quality Affordable Housing		
1. CPP 7	1	
Sub Total	3	1
Total	105	92

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Implementation Panel - 2: 84.215N

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Delta Health Alliance, Inc (U215N120032)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project. In determining the need for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

Reader's Score: 14

Sub Question

1. 1a. Magnitude of Problems to be Addressed

The magnitude or severity of the problems to be addressed by the proposed project as described by indicators of need and other relevant indicators identified in part by the needs assessment and segmentation analysis.

Strengths:

Technical data provide solid evidence that the Mississippi Delta community is a high need, highly at risk community with a history of intractable community risk indicators (e19). Using a 2010 Needs and Segmentation Analysis, conducted by the independent research team, Southern Research Group (Jackson, MD), the applicant summarizes and reports its findings in detail. Data collection included: a Survey of Indianola residents, informational interviews by 27 key stakeholders, and review of secondary sources (e.g., US Department of Census, US Department of Health and Human Services, etc.) (e22-e28). The results of the analysis demonstrate the severity of the community's problems, citing a range of data including economic, racial, educational, demographic, and historic risk factors. Recent (2010) risk factors are charted on page e20, e.g., percent poverty; population under 5, percent Black, per capita income, unemployment rate, adult high school graduates, etc). Further evidence is summarized on pages e23-e24, adding additional documentation of poverty status, number of single-parent homes, infant mortality rate, teenage birth rates, and pre-kindergarten through college educational risk evidence.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses: The applicant used both community and county-based data, but it was not always clear which data element described community-centered challenges and which data element described county-based challenges.

Reader's Score: 9

2. 1b. Geographic Area Description

The extent to which the geographically defined area has been described.

Sub Question

Strengths:

The applicant defines its target area by showing a detailed map of the Indianola community (e29). The initiative targets the Indianola Public School District (IPSD), an eligible Rural and Low Income School area (AP 2: rural). All public schools within the geographic region served by the program are included in the design. The Indianola Promise Community (IPC) will partner with the IPSD, which is currently functioning under state supervision due to persistent educational failure (e29). Schools, community organizations, and University of Southern Mississippi within two counties - Indianola City and Sunflower County--are included in the project's catchment area (e20). Sources cited specify the data that explains the need within this area (e22 and (e29). These data create a baseline for the project's long-range planning and simultaneously make a powerful case indicating that this geographic sector faces significant social, economic, and educational needs.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

Reader's Score: 25

Sub Question

1. 2a. Comprehensive Strategy and Solutions

The extent to which the continuum of solutions is aligned with an ambitious, rigorous, and comprehensive strategy for improvement of schools in the neighborhood.

Strengths:

The proposed continuum of solutions, which is thoroughly defined, described, and mapped (e31 & e32), includes an ambitious, comprehensive, and rigorous strategy for improving schools by strengthening school and community linkages and supports. The applicant offers a "two pronged-solution" to school improvement: (1) support for ambitious, district-led school reform (e33) and (2) interlinked school and community-based programs such as early childhood learning, after-school programs, GED-courses, among others (Tables 3,4,5, pages e35 - e46). These tables demonstrate plans for new and scaled up school reforms as well as new programs that bring research-based initiatives to the community for the first time. Programs are clustered into the eight elements in Delta Health's "continuum of solutions" (Figure 2, e31), including prenatal and family planning programs, parent, maternal, infant services, early childhood development, in-school and after-school curriculum and enrichment activities, job training, adult literacy, and college assistance. Indianola Public School District (IPSD), currently in State Conservatorship, is working closely with the IPC planners (e120, MOU). According to the narrative and confirmed by the Conservator s letter of support in the MOU, State Conservator, Earl Watkins, was actively involved with developing IPC strategies that align with the school priorities. Moreover, the application demonstrates this alignment by citing plans to undertake activities for improving curricula, increasing parent involvement, building teacher capacity, and engaging students more fully (evidenced in the discussion on page e33 and e34 and in the MOU, e108 and by serving as a funding partner, e118). What is unique about this presentation is that the continuum of solutions aligns with and supplements the proposed targeted school system-based solutions (Figures 2 & 3, e31-e32). The IPC proposes integrated health and supplemental academic services, as well as counseling services targeted for each population which touches schools (young children, parents, teens, dads and moms, and children and enrolled children and youth).

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 10

2. 2b. Implementation Plan

The extent to which the applicant describes an implementation plan to create a complete continuum of solutions, including early learning through grade 12, college- and career-readiness, and family and community supports, without time and resource gaps, that will prepare all children in the neighborhood to attain an excellent education and successfully transition to college and a career, and that will significantly increase the proportion of students in the neighborhood that are served by the complete continuum to reach scale over time.

Strengths:

The implementation plan is evidenced in Table 3, which details how new and scaled programs will extend services in the needs areas identified and in Table 5 (e43), which demonstrates the integration of existing neighborhood assets and school programs. Programs described in this section of the application are then further defined in terms of who will offer the program, proposed measurable outcomes, evidence of the program's potential for success, cost factors, targeted service groups and numbers within each school community (Table F1, e141-160). The vision is comprehensive and ambitious. The application describes how each contributing component sets out to serve specific target needs groups with a rigorous and research-based program that is an integrated part of the continuum of solutions. Solutions are charted efficiently but the text is substantive - explicitly defining what service will be offered, who will be served, how the service will be implemented, and the frequency of the service or activity. These charted program descriptions richly detail the plan for offering early learning through grade 12 college and career readiness programs, while explaining how these programs will address resource gaps and support enhanced learning so that transitions across schooling levels for all children are better supported for ever better assurance of success. Existing and new programs are inter-linked and defined in terms of how they serve current needs and scale up to meet continuing needs.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. 2c. Identification of Existing Neighborhood Assets

The extent to which the applicant identifies existing neighborhood assets and programs supported by Federal, State, local, and private funds that will be used to implement a continuum of solutions.

Strengths:

Assets are described on page e28. Table 5 (e43-e45) details the existing neighborhood assets and school programs in each of the solution areas, stating the organization that offers a service, its target group, the nature of the service, and, in appropriate cases, costs and evidence of the sustainability of these assets. The evidence demonstrates that IPC knows its community resources and has built its proposed programs on these assets.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

4. 2d. Implementation Plan for Absolute Priority 1

The extent to which the applicant describes its implementation plan, including clear, annual goals for improving systems and leveraging resources as described in paragraph (2) of Absolute Priority 1.

Strengths:

Pages e46 - e48 define the project's implementation plan, including the goals and specific objectives for accomplishing the strategic design that will meet Absolute Priority 1 goals. The plan defines which organizations are involved, which activities each organization will implement and unfolds each initiative across multiple agencies. The goals address new program implementation (Goal 1), stakeholder implementation of new programs within existing operations (Goal 2), approaches to long-term strategic planning through realistic strategic and sustainable planning among all partner (Goal 3), and approaches to data collection and evaluation that monitors and implements all initiatives (Goal 4). Objectives are specific and time-bound, and include names of agencies, programs, and partners, that IPC will serve. Detail also includes what partners will render services, and how the IPC will support and monitor programs that provide cradle-to-career solutions by collecting, analyzing and evaluating data. Delta Health Alliance will work with the National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center (nSPARC) to build data bases that will support continual evaluation processes (e59).

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Services

The Secretary considers the quality of the services to be provided by the proposed project. In determining the quality of the project services, the Secretary considers:

Reader's Score: 11

Sub Question

1. 3a. Needs Assessment and Segmentation Analysis

The extent to which the applicant describes how the needs assessment and segmentation analysis, including identifying and describing indicators, were used to determine each solution within the continuum.

Strengths:

A thorough needs assessment, reported on pages (e22-e24), identifies numerous risk factors affecting the community and also details the paucity of quality pre-kindergarten through high school services of quality (e24-25). In addition, the applicant recognizes the need for expanded academic and extracurricular opportunities and itemizes a host of non-school supports designed to broaden the safety net for children and youth (e26 -e28). The application defines six primary categories of community need and designates how each specific project addresses one or more identified needs (e48), and follows with a chart (Figure 3) that demonstrates this alignment web (see also Table F1) Planned services address each age group and each demonstrated need. This careful and detailed needs/segmentation analysis is

Sub Question

linked to solution continuum defined in the IPC Pipeline of Community Programs (e32).

Weaknesses:

The overall strength of this section is slightly weakened by the inconsistency and lack of specificity about how outcomes/indicators will be measured and reported. Outcome measures are provided, but it is not always clear what data collection tools and methodologies will be used to collect data that will track progress toward outcomes (e.g., e141, changes in students' perception of fresh produce; teen pregnancy rate, drop-out rate, etc.). Many outcomes in this section could use additional indication of data sources and/or measurement strategies.

Reader's Score: 4

2. 3b. Evidence-Based Solutions

The extent to which the applicant documents that proposed solutions are based on the best available evidence including, where available, strong or moderate evidence.

Strengths:

The applicant cites evidence for its continuum of solutions on pages e51 through e53, proposing to use the Harlem Children's Zone model as its central organizing framework. This best-evidence program has demonstrated in various urban centers the feasibility of creating "a pipeline of coordinated programs (e51)" that can break generational cycles of poverty, poor health, and weak academic outcomes. Additional best-available evidence for three programs that will be implemented is also cited on pages e52-e53 (Baby College, Parents as Teachers, B.B. King Museum's Bridge Building Ambassadors, and Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids in Mississippi (SPARK)). Finally, available evidence for the proposed solution programs and is further documented in Appendix F (page e140 forward). In this Appendix, for each program cited, the applicant includes a text box referencing the evidence that is available for each program's potential for success in Indianola.

Weaknesses:

Although the applicant provides citations and states evidence regarding its proposed solutions, the actual research basis of programs is not always clear. For example, the citations for the "Call Me Mister" program (e143) include references to newspapers and National Public Radio, but not the research evidence that brought these programs to the attention of the public media. Other evidence in this Appendix is similarly unclear about which programs are grounded in "strong" or "moderate" evidence, according to national research-based evidence standards (e.g., the Carver Elementary School Garden is supported only by "findings from the National Environmental Education Foundation e141;" the IPC Summer Camp Program's evidence is "assorted models depending on proposed solutions and target audience", e145, and "Bringing the Lessons Home, sites similarly weak evidence on p. e147, etc.) A systematic bibliography of research-based evidence sources would have filled this documentation gap. Finally, although the Harlem Children's Zone program is widely known for its successes in urban centers, the application would be strengthened by citing specific sources of evidence for its potential in a rural community.

Reader's Score: 4

3. 3c. Description of Annual Goals

The extent to which the applicant describes clear, annual goals for improvement on indicators.

Strengths:

The applicant defines goals and indicators at various levels of specificity for each of the priorities that it intends to address (e48-e50). The applicant defines 10 goals for measuring progress annually (e53-e56). The targets are set for each of the elements in the continuum of solutions (e31 & e32). Each broad goal defines yearly targets, and each set of targets is specific to the service/program that will be offered. Tables 6 and 7 (e61-64) link program goals to education indicators and base line data that will be used to measure continuous improvement.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

In several of the goals (e.g., in Goals VI & IX), the specific measures, methodologies and/or annual indicator targets are not clearly specified. In other cases (as in Goal IX), the yearly targets are provided, but it is not clear what the numbers refer to, e.g., Year 1, 220(10%) etc. Annual targets were not located for the Arts and Humanities programs. The intent and effort to be goal-driven is evident in the application, but additional methodological and indicator precision would strengthen this component.

Reader's Score: 3

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the experience, lessons learned, and proposal to build capacity of the applicant's management team and project director in all of the following areas:

Reader's Score: 39

Sub Question

1. 4a. Ability to Work with Neighborhood Residents

Experience, lessons learned, and proposal to build capacity of the applicant's management team and project director in working with the neighborhood and its residents; the schools described in paragraph (2)(b) of Absolute Priority 1; the LEA in which those schools are located; Federal, State, and local government leaders; and other service providers.

Strengths:

A working Board of Directors meets quarterly and manages Delta Health Alliance's (DHA) business affairs, oversees progress, and manages strategic planning. The Board, with the IPC Advisory Committee, guided the application's development since 2009. The Advisory Committee grew from a small core of stakeholders and state and local officials to include a board of 21 members the represents residents of Indianola, a third of whom have children or grand children in the public schools, and over 60 percent of which reside in the target geographic area (e57). IPC staff members who created the application and will direct and manage the promise neighborhood program were involved throughout the program's development. Evidence is presented demonstrating prior success by the applicant partners in generating multiple public and private funding sources that have established the organization's capacity to design a continuum of solutions that engages key agencies, groups, and individual who will implement the program 9e57-e58). Plans for coordinating with schools include weekly meetings among representatives and school program coordinators, weekly status reports, and monthly meetings of residential neighborhood Street Captains (e58).

Weaknesses:

While the plans for coordination among participants is laid out, the applicant does not fully address strategies for building the capacity of the management teams who are working with the neighborhoods and residents, including the schools. It is evident that the applicant has planned for establishing and scaling up strategies for engaging the communities the IPC serves. Missing from the plan is consideration of new capacities that will need to be developed at all levels of the project, from top managers to street workers. In addition, additional information specifying role definitions and

Sub Question

responsibilities would strengthen the organization's attentiveness to capacity building and sustainability.

Reader's Score: 8

2. 4b. Ability to Utilize Data

Experience, lessons learned, and proposal to build capacity of the applicant's management team and project director in collecting, analyzing, and using data for decision-making, learning, continuous improvement, and accountability, including whether the applicant has a plan to build, adapt, or expand a longitudinal data system that integrates student-level data from multiple sources in order to measure progress while abiding by privacy laws and requirements.

Strengths:

: The Delta Health Alliance (DHA) team has been working with the National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center (nSPARC) to develop the integrated data base that will track and manage the project, participants, outcomes, and ensure the program meets all federal data requirements (e59). A second organization, Social Solutions, will train end users on collecting, entering, and reporting data that will both track participation and become the basis for analyzing implementation and impact. Data flow within participant organizations that will manage the data system is depicted in Figure 4, showing the connection among the data providers and the IPC itself. The applicant's plan calls for collecting, analyzing, and using data to drive decision making and accountability. For example, its partner, Social Solutions, which is building the data warehouse, plans to include tools for entering baseline data, mapping programs, and tracking outcome measures (e59). The plan presented shows how managers are building on lessons learned in their planning processes to develop future systems that will integrate data sources and report program progress to stakeholders and managers (e.g., community meetings, town hall sessions, meetings with local officials, and social events organized by neighborhood Watch groups) (e59). The DHA has already established workable partnerships with nSPARC and Social Solutions to link data bases and generate information so that data can be used to support implementation as well as accountability. The plan commits to integrate quantitative data systems and also to tap into qualitative feedback from the ground. To further integrate and complement these systems, an outside evaluation team from the University of Chicago Illinois will be contracted to design data collection systems that collect data in a manner that abides by privacy laws and requirements and meets the requirements for individual- and program-level data collection needed to evaluate the overall initiative according to quality professional evaluation standards (e66).

Weaknesses:

Continual capacity building of the leadership team, partners, and staff was addressed in a very limited way (through training) in this component. To develop and sustain new systems, however, the applicant would be well served to demonstrate its ongoing commitment to building leadership, management, and staff data capacity. This will be especially important as the community introduces, builds, and uses new and modernized strategic planning, reporting, and accountability systems. Such continuous training and capacity building are needed in a community facing persistent challenges in its capacity to build strong and sustainable institutions which effectively serve at risk children, youth and families.

Reader's Score: 13

3. 4c. Ability to Create Partnerships

Experience, lessons learned, and proposal to build capacity of the applicant's management team and project director in creating formal and informal partnerships, including the alignment of the visions, theories of action, and theories of change described in its memorandum of understanding, and creating a system for holding partners accountable for performance in accordance with the memorandum of understanding.

Sub Question

Strengths:

Appendix C, Memorandum of Understanding, details each partner's vision, theories of change, theories of action, costs, processes and partners and their alignment with the applicant's targeted programs that constitute its proposed continuum of solutions. The narrative recognizes past challenges to creating integrated strategies for addressing persistent community problems including, siloed systems that limited success of potential strategies, resistance and distrust of outsiders' solutions, and the limits of top-down change approaches. The vision brings "as many people in a room" as can "realistically" plan and work together on "equality terms." The goal is to ensure that all people in the partnership have a meaningful stake in the change process. The applicant acknowledges that creating partnerships is only a start, because the real challenge will be to "overcome the hurdles" itemized throughout the project design to "effect change" as proposed. The narrative, combined with the carefully described sets of partners, actions, plans (throughout Appendices C & F), create a structure that links action partners, planning strategies, outcome expectations, and accountability mechanisms... Together, these plans hold promise for tackling old problems with new solutions, monitoring the solution implementation to ensure that it occurs within the framework of the IPC vision for the future "promise" community. Accountability structures, that include project-specific evidence a data-specified baseline, are defined in Appendix C for all partners. The IPC leadership team is virtually entirely local; the 18 current partners in the collaborative have successfully coordinated, built constituencies, series, and have defined this proposal, working together since 2009. This application's vision, depth, and breath are strong evidence that this partnership has great potential for success. Throughout, structures are defined that can detect failures of systems or implementation breakdowns before they damage the great potential of the defined integrated programs.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 10

4. 4d. Ability to Integrate Funding Streams

Experience, lessons learned, and proposal to build capacity of the applicant's management team and project director in integrating funding streams from multiple public and private sources, including its proposal to leverage and integrate high-quality programs in the neighborhood into the continuum of solutions.

Strengths:

The evidence presented in Table 3 (e17, forward) shows how the DHA team has already integrated programs, structures, and funding streams. This regional partnership, working under the direction of DHA, has demonstrated its capacity to secure continuous funding for infrastructures and support programs that establish the foundation of this 'promise neighborhood' (e67). The example of how the partnership built one community resource - KaBOOM playground--in six hours of dedicated work is on-the-ground of practical solution finding that leverages and creates a high-quality program services. The applicant lists other example new, sustainable funding streams secured, including: (1) integrated electronic health records system, (2) a healthy literacy program for families and children; and (3) plans to increase the quality and efficiency of health services by providing community health follow-up and teaching care that will teach discharged hospital patients skills for monitoring and managing their own care. These examples demonstrate the management's capacity to recognize opportunities for partnership coordination and to seek and secure integrated funding to support initiatives that support the proposed continuing of solutions.

Weaknesses:

As in other components of this section, capacity building was not addressed at a level that provides evidence of the project's planning for long-term sustainability. While the management team has demonstrated capacity for leveraging new resources, to sustain that skill in an ever changing policy and business environment requires attention to internal and continuing capacity building.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 8

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Comprehensive Local Early Learning Network

- 1. To meet this priority, an applicant must include a plan that proposes to expand, enhance, or modify an existing network of early learning programs and services to ensure that they are high-quality and comprehensive for children from birth through the third grade.**

Strengths:

IPC matches funds from the Kellogg Foundation to develop the IPC Early Learning Collaborative, establishing components of the pipeline in Jun 2011. The applicant describes a substantive planning process for each program component which estimated 458 eligible children, ages 3-4 in the IPC area (e49-e50). The network of integrated early childhood services available to the community (including Head Start, SPARK, and several specific IPC-school-based programs) will ultimately serve over 1600 preschool and elementary school children. All services are also fully accessible to handicapped children. Included in the MOU partners is Mississippi State University which will offer programs focused on developing the health and stability of pregnant mothers, new parents, and infants and children under five years of age (e114). Mississippi Center for Education Innovation will complement these services with parent-focused programs, including health and child care and parent training. Appendix F further describes program services, description, resources invested of all contributors to the early learning initiative. The plan proposes multifaceted programming that services children's health, educational, and parent needs. The partners appear to offer unique and integrated services, depending on their specializations, using nationally developed and tested program models (e.g., Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids (SPARK), by the Children's Defense Fund, Head Start, programs by the Parents for Public Schools of Jackson, which will replicate successful humanities and arts programs). The range of resource availability complements the focused schooling components offered by the Indianola Public Schools, planned for children under 5 years of age.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority - Quality Internet Connectivity

- 1. To meet this priority, an applicant must ensure that almost all students in the geographic area proposed to be served have broadband internet access at home and at school, the knowledge and skills to use broadband internet access effectively, and a connected computing device to support schoolwork.**

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

Competitive Preference Priority - Arts and Humanities

1. To meet this priority, an applicant must include in its plan opportunities for children and youth to experience and participate actively in the arts and humanities in their community so as to broaden, enrich, and enliven the educational, cultural, and civic experiences available in the neighborhood.

Strengths:

Four separate initiatives, integrated into program components described in other sections of the application, will focus on and enhance the Arts and Humanities offerings for children, parents, and communities (e50-e51). The local museum will offer cultural enrichment by exposing students to museums nationwide and by creating opportunities to involve children and youth in arts activities. In the numerous program specific descriptions throughout the application, arts and humanities components are indicated, as appropriate (e.g., Gardens in Every School, e141, Art of Living Smart, e147, BB's Bridge Building Ambassadors and Youth Leadership Program, e148). Weaving arts and humanities into many programs and engaging varied partners to meet this priority increases the likelihood that all students in the geographic area.

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority - Quality Affordable Housing

1. To meet this priority, an applicant must propose to serve geographic areas that were the subject of an affordable housing transformation pursuant to a Choice Neighborhoods or HOPE VI grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development during FY2009 or later years.

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Delta Health Alliance, Inc (U215N120032)

Reader #2: *****

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Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Need for Project		
1. Selection Criteria 1	15	14
Quality of Project Design		
1. Selection Criteria 2	25	19
Quality of Project Services		
1. Selection Criteria 3	15	8
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Selection Criteria 4	45	37
Sub Total	100	78
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Comprehensive Local Early Learning Network		
1. CPP 4	2	1
Sub Total	2	1
Competitive Preference Priority		
Quality Internet Connectivity		
1. CPP 5	1	0
Arts and Humanities		
1. CPP 6	1	1
Quality Affordable Housing		
1. CPP 7	1	0
Sub Total	3	1
Total	105	80

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Implementation Panel - 2: 84.215N

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Delta Health Alliance, Inc (U215N120032)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project. In determining the need for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

Reader's Score: 14

Sub Question

1. 1a. Magnitude of Problems to be Addressed

The magnitude or severity of the problems to be addressed by the proposed project as described by indicators of need and other relevant indicators identified in part by the needs assessment and segmentation analysis.

Strengths:

Clear demographic evidence is used to demonstrate the status of this county in relation to the rest of the state and the country; the county is 19th in the U.S. in poverty, and is below MS on all other indicators. A contracted needs assessment was conducted using a variety of data gathering methods with different audiences (including residents), and including test data (pp. 3-11). The school system is being run by a state appointed "Conservator" based on poor performance, with schools ranging from "watch" to "failing". Specific pockets of need are identified (e.g., infant mortality, teen births, disparate levels of K preparedness, fragmentation of family/community services); areas that are not of concern are also listed (health, safety, drop-out rate). The project was awarded a planning grant in 2010-2011 and continued with its collaborative efforts despite an unsuccessful implementation grant applications for 2011-2012, with particular emphasis in early childhood. The project was and continues to be led by Delta Health, ensuring continuity with previous efforts. An updated needs assessment in 2012 identified similar needs (p. 9). Some information is provided on impact of programs initiated after the planning year (p. 10).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not always distinguish county and neighborhood data, making it less clear why this geographic area was chosen as the target for the proposal; the lack of clarity also has implications for establishing baseline against which to measure progress. Language of the almost 20% Hispanic population is not addressed within the needs assessment; it can not be determined whether this should be addressed within the array of solutions. A description is needed of how and whether students from the alternative and career schools have been included in the indicators on student performance.

Reader's Score: 9

2. 1b. Geographic Area Description

The extent to which the geographically defined area has been described.

Sub Question

Strengths:

Geographic boundaries are defined as the town of Indianola, which is at highest risk of towns in the county (p. 2), based on needs assessment data. The town is located within a rural county, surrounded by other rural counties.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted in this section.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers:**

Reader's Score: 19

Sub Question

- 1. 2a. Comprehensive Strategy and Solutions**

The extent to which the continuum of solutions is aligned with an ambitious, rigorous, and comprehensive strategy for improvement of schools in the neighborhood.

Strengths:

The district contains four schools identified as risk, watch, probation, or failing. The district is under "Conservatorship" by the state for school improvement; the school therefore appears to meet the criteria for submission. There is an appointed Conservator; this individual lends full support to the proposed project as shown in the MOU and in an attached letter. Many types of supports for academic achievement have been built into the continuum of solutions at each level of schooling (Fig. 3), including after-school and summer programs.

Weaknesses:

The state terminology for "Conservatorship" is not defined, making it difficult to determine which of the four models is being used or whether the model is the same across the schools.

Reader's Score: 8

- 2. 2b. Implementation Plan**

The extent to which the applicant describes an implementation plan to create a complete continuum of solutions, including early learning through grade 12, college- and career-readiness, and family and community supports, without time and resource gaps, that will prepare all children in the neighborhood to attain an excellent education and successfully transition to college and a career, and that will significantly increase the proportion of students in the neighborhood that are served by the complete continuum to reach scale over time.

Strengths:

Solutions were selected collaboratively, with input from students and community members, as part of the planning grant. A continuum of solutions is described from pre-natal to career (i.e., infant/maternal, early childhood, elementary, junior high, high school, college, career), with solutions linked to each level of the continuum clearly indicated (Figure 3,p. 14). Three helpful criteria were used to choose solutions: compliment district reforms; community-based; integration of new solutions with existing services. A

Sub Question

wide array of community-based solutions to support school improvement are shown in Table 3, pp. 17-18.

Weaknesses:

It is not clear how some aspects of the plan compliment or expand school reform efforts, or whether in fact they themselves represent school reform efforts. Figure 3 (e.32) is especially confusing in this regard since none of the activities listed except homework rooms and college prep are clearly assigned to the school system.

Reader's Score: 4

3. 2c. Identification of Existing Neighborhood Assets

The extent to which the applicant identifies existing neighborhood assets and programs supported by Federal, State, local, and private funds that will be used to implement a continuum of solutions.

Strengths:

The applicant has identified and brought together an impressive array of partners who bring funding and in-kind contributions at all levels, public and private, to provide solutions that address needs in this community. Delta Health, as the coordinator of the planning grant and continuing facilitator of implementation has already brought these partners together to accomplish important activities related to the goals. MOUs contain tasks specific to each partner, demonstrating that each understands its specific roles within the project.

Weaknesses:

Assets for some parts of the continuum (e.g., Early Head Start, birth-2 in general) are not described although they are shown as part of the in-kind contributions.

Reader's Score: 4

4. 2d. Implementation Plan for Absolute Priority 1

The extent to which the applicant describes its implementation plan, including clear, annual goals for improving systems and leveraging resources as described in paragraph (2) of Absolute Priority 1.

Strengths:

An implementation plan including goals is shown on p. 28-30, with 2 phases of implementation identified for one goal (Goal I). Sustainability plans will be built into all programs, and a 5-year plan will be developed for continuing support (Goal III). Each program will be required to have 3 outcome measures in order to demonstrate accomplishment, with summary of data by an outside evaluator (Goal IV).

Weaknesses:

Implementation of system goals, shown on pp. 28-30, does not include anticipated progress in improving systems across the 5 years of the project; achievement of specific benchmarks for evaluating systems improvement are not provided. System goals also do not address expanding to scale in order to reach more children (e.g., expanding the successful Street Captains program (p. 39) beyond the one neighborhood.

Reader's Score: 3

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Services

The Secretary considers the quality of the services to be provided by the proposed project. In

determining the quality of the project services, the Secretary considers:

Reader's Score: 8

Sub Question

1. 3a. Needs Assessment and Segmentation Analysis

The extent to which the applicant describes how the needs assessment and segmentation analysis, including identifying and describing indicators, were used to determine each solution within the continuum.

Strengths:

A needs assessment was conducted as part of the planning grant, and then updated in preparation for the current proposal. Data were segmented according to the continuum of solutions (prenatal to career) to determine need, and then matched to community assets by group. Many solutions were clearly linked to needs demonstrated in the data for each segment of the population. Solutions show careful attention to assets available from the county surrounding this rural town as well as from the town itself, resulting in a wider array of possible solutions.

Weaknesses:

Not all of the proposed goals and solutions shown in Tables 6-7 appear to reflect needs identified in the needs assessment (e.g., health, drop-out, mobility); rather, the list of goals for improvement appears to reflect all of those listed in the federal register whether required or not. Thus, this table is not clearly related to the continuum of needed solutions. Tables 6-7 (pp. 44-45) also do not provide a standard (benchmark) against which the percentages listed are being evaluated. The measures used for Kindergarten entry address only one aspect of learning (emergent literacy) rather than broader development. Baselines for some indicators listed as "to be assessed" should already be available, such as school data for entering 10th graders. Some areas (e.g., access to computers) have no indicators listed across years.

Reader's Score: 3

2. 3b. Evidence-Based Solutions

The extent to which the applicant documents that proposed solutions are based on the best available evidence including, where available, strong or moderate evidence.

Strengths:

Some evaluation evidence is provided on larger efforts such as school reform in general, and some local evaluation evidence is provided on some programs, including those implemented by the applicant. Some general literature (e.g., on health benefits of eating vegetables) is also cited. Use of some secondary sources also is appropriately utilized, representing summaries of research by respected, well-known policy groups and addressing a practice as a whole rather than as a specific model (e.g., Children's Defense Fund in support of extended school time, p. 7 of App. F).

Weaknesses:

There is a lack of evidence for most of the specific programs and approaches included in the continuum of solutions. Evidence on different models that will be employed is needed, and would strengthen choice of particular approaches within the context of the project; if such evidence is not available, this should be noted. Recognition in the media or use by other programs does not provide strong evidence. Overall, the applicant does not address whether the evidence provided is moderate or strong.

Reader's Score: 3

Sub Question

3. 3c. Description of Annual Goals

The extent to which the applicant describes clear, annual goals for improvement on indicators.

Strengths:

Goals in the form of indicators are described, and all required education-related indicators are included in the plan.

Weaknesses:

Baselines are not provided for all indicators (e.g., Kindergarten readiness), nor are projections made with respect to percentages expected to achieve benchmarks (pp. 35-39). Since indicators often are described as % increase per year, it is not possible to determine the % of children who would actually receive services across the years.

Reader's Score: 2

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the experience, lessons learned, and proposal to build capacity of the applicant's management team and project director in all of the following areas:

Reader's Score: 37

Sub Question

1. 4a. Ability to Work with Neighborhood Residents

Experience, lessons learned, and proposal to build capacity of the applicant's management team and project director in working with the neighborhood and its residents; the schools described in paragraph (2)(b) of Absolute Priority 1; the LEA in which those schools are located; Federal, State, and local government leaders; and other service providers.

Strengths:

The applicant has demonstrated, through the previous planning grant and subsequent activities, the ability to bring together a variety of funding streams and constituencies (including neighborhood representatives) to address specific community needs, as well as to obtain and leverage funds to support specific activities. Vitae contained in the proposal, as well as activities accomplished, show considerable expertise in areas related to community development, collaboration, systems management, and funding. An Advisory Committee shows broad membership (p. 39), and regular, quarterly meetings are scheduled for project oversight. Staff hired by the project will be assigned to individual students and follow them through the system, ensuring continuity across age and levels of schooling; linkages with the school will be achieved by relating this support to each student's IPP.

Weaknesses:

Role descriptions are needed for all of the different staff members who will be hired through the project in order to evaluate how they will interact with and support the schools and other services; an organizational chart would also provide important information about roles and their relationship to the lead applicant and to the partners. Some important community representatives do not appear to be included on the Advisory Committee, including the CAP agency. Activities are not described for building capacity in the local community, in order to sustain capacity after the project.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 7

2. 4b. Ability to Utilize Data

Experience, lessons learned, and proposal to build capacity of the applicant's management team and project director in collecting, analyzing, and using data for decision-making, learning, continuous improvement, and accountability, including whether the applicant has a plan to build, adapt, or expand a longitudinal data system that integrates student-level data from multiple sources in order to measure progress while abiding by privacy laws and requirements.

Strengths:

The project will work with an external consultant to develop an integrated warehouse of data (MS Longitudinal Data System, p. 41). Quarterly meetings of the program committee and the Advisory Committee will be held to review progress and to ensure that partners are accountable, with assistance provided for any needed improvement. Strategies are described for meeting privacy requirements, and members of the project team have already received training in meeting privacy requirements (p. 42).

Weaknesses:

A process and strategies for building capacity of community partners to use data to make management decisions are needed. It is also not clear how data will be used to hold partners accountable.

Reader's Score: 12

3. 4c. Ability to Create Partnerships

Experience, lessons learned, and proposal to build capacity of the applicant's management team and project director in creating formal and informal partnerships, including the alignment of the visions, theories of action, and theories of change described in its memorandum of understanding, and creating a system for holding partners accountable for performance in accordance with the memorandum of understanding.

Strengths:

Statements of vision and theories are provided for each partner as a part of the MOU; these seem consistent both with one another and with Promise Neighborhoods as an overarching framework. The MOU also outlines specific commitments of each partner, which will enable evaluation of participation.

Weaknesses:

Some entities shown in the MOU have not been described as providing portions of the continuum of solutions (Abundant Living, Sisterhood Program, D.A.R.E.). The lack of consistency across sections indicates that the array of partners and their contributions to the total plan may not yet be fully conceptualized and in place.

Reader's Score: 9

4. 4d. Ability to Integrate Funding Streams

Experience, lessons learned, and proposal to build capacity of the applicant's management team and project director in integrating funding streams from multiple public and private sources, including its proposal to leverage and integrate high-quality programs in the neighborhood into the continuum of solutions.

Strengths:

The applicant and partners demonstrate considerable experience in bringing funding streams together around common goals. Integrated funding from USDOE and from private sources was used for the planning grant process, and funds or in-kind activities have been leveraged from multiple sources to begin the process of implementing solutions.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

While the community has many assets, it appears that some solutions are being offered by more than one partner (e.g., help with homework); a description is needed of how decisions will be made and how services will be coordinated and integrated at the level of the individual child and family. A process should be described for building capacity to continue integration of data streams beyond the project.

Reader's Score: 9

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Comprehensive Local Early Learning Network

- 1. To meet this priority, an applicant must include a plan that proposes to expand, enhance, or modify an existing network of early learning programs and services to ensure that they are high-quality and comprehensive for children from birth through the third grade.**

Strengths:

Early childhood was identified as a priority based on the planning grant, and activities were initiated without federal funding. Services were mapped in relation to age and number of children and included young children with disabilities. Staff have worked with the MSU Early Childhood Institute to achieve solutions to address quality standards, and have established an early childhood network in the community.

Weaknesses:

The state context of early childhood (the systems involved) and standards (Early Learning Standards, program quality, personnel requirements, data requirements) is not described, making it difficult to evaluate the efficacy of local efforts to address quality (e.g., Excel by 5). Given early childhood as a focus area, a discussion of what has been accomplished should be provided. The number of total, unduplicated slots of different kinds (e.g., child care, public school preschool, Early Head Start) is not provided for different ages, so that the big picture of what is available cannot be determined. Specific plans for increasing high quality slots and upgrading current quality are not provided.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority - Quality Internet Connectivity

- 1. To meet this priority, an applicant must ensure that almost all students in the geographic area proposed to be served have broadband internet access at home and at school, the knowledge and skills to use broadband internet access effectively, and a connected computing device to support schoolwork.**

Strengths:

This CPP was not addressed.

Weaknesses:

This CPP was not addressed.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Arts and Humanities

- 1. To meet this priority, an applicant must include in its plan opportunities for children and youth to experience and participate actively in the arts and humanities in their community so as to broaden,**

enrich, and enliven the educational, cultural, and civic experiences available in the neighborhood.

Strengths:

Several programs will address arts and humanities, and examples are provided of related accomplishments (e.g., community art project by parents and children). The community's partnership with the B.B. King Museum supports several programs for different ages, directed toward the arts and toward developing pride in the historical significance of music in the community.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted here.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority - Quality Affordable Housing

1. To meet this priority, an applicant must propose to serve geographic areas that were the subject of an affordable housing transformation pursuant to a Choice Neighborhoods or HOPE VI grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development during FY2009 or later years.

Strengths:

This CPP was not addressed.

Weaknesses:

This CPP was not addressed.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 10/26/2012 07:23 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 11/01/2012 09:17 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Delta Health Alliance, Inc (U215N120032)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Need for Project		
1. Selection Criteria 1	15	13
Quality of Project Design		
1. Selection Criteria 2	25	23
Quality of Project Services		
1. Selection Criteria 3	15	9
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Selection Criteria 4	45	40
Sub Total	100	85
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Comprehensive Local Early Learning Network		
1. CPP 4	2	2
Sub Total	2	2
Competitive Preference Priority		
Quality Internet Connectivity		
1. CPP 5	1	0
Arts and Humanities		
1. CPP 6	1	0
Quality Affordable Housing		
1. CPP 7	1	0
Sub Total	3	0
Total	105	87

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Implementation Panel - 2: 84.215N

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Delta Health Alliance, Inc (U215N120032)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project. In determining the need for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

Reader's Score: 13

Sub Question

1. 1a. Magnitude of Problems to be Addressed

The magnitude or severity of the problems to be addressed by the proposed project as described by indicators of need and other relevant indicators identified in part by the needs assessment and segmentation analysis.

Strengths:

The applicant provides a summary of the statistics showing that the residents of the target community are very poor, largely minority, and either underemployed or unemployed. Also summarized is data showing high school graduation rates and ACT college readiness test scores as lower than national averages (pp. e19-e20). In its discussion of the needs and segmentation analyses, the applicant describes in detail a specially commissioned survey of the community that provides data to support that these severe problems permeate the community. It also indicates data from a variety of reports from private sector organizations as well as from school district, state and Federal agencies that was gathered to profile the community. This data likewise shows evidence of the severity of a wide range of community problems including a poorly performing school district and a scarcity of quality early learning programs (pp. e21-e27).

Weaknesses:

In its presentation of the community's problems the applicant occasionally provides county-wide data rather than focusing on data solely reflecting the community -- for juvenile delinquency rates, number of health care professionals, number of single parent homes, infant mortality rates, and teen pregnancy rates, for instance (pp. e23-e24). The mixing of county and community data confuses the applicant's evidence presented by this community's issues.

Reader's Score: 8

2. 1b. Geographic Area Description

The extent to which the geographically defined area has been described.

Strengths:

The application includes a map of Mississippi that highlights the location of the target community, Indianola, Mississippi. It also describes its location in terms of its distance and direction from more well-known cities (p. e29).

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

Reader's Score: 23

Sub Question

1. 2a. Comprehensive Strategy and Solutions

The extent to which the continuum of solutions is aligned with an ambitious, rigorous, and comprehensive strategy for improvement of schools in the neighborhood.

Strengths:

The application states that the proposed project will include services for students in 6 local schools, which are listed on p. e16 and it stresses the project will involve collaboration with 15 partners including the school district (pp. e17; e19). Specifically it notes that the school-based programs in the service continuum are integrated with the school district's strategic plan, which has as its focal points addressing issues of wellness and infant mortality, early childhood education (ECE), academic readiness, school improvement, college readiness, parent involvement, teen parents, after school enrichment, poverty, and juvenile crime (pp. e31-e32). Noting that the local school system is an important community cornerstone -- as it is in many rural communities -- the applicant states that the schools will be the keystone around which all program components fit (p. 33). It describes the elements of a comprehensive district's school improvement plan and then presents a matrix that lists the project's service delivery strategies and details each program associated with the strategies that will be implemented in schools. This matrix also shows how these programs are linked to specific elements of the district's school improvement plan (pp. e35-e44) and thus demonstrates the proposed program is well aligned with this ambitious plan. The application includes a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in which the superintendent commits the district to the programs described in the matrix and also commits matching funds toward implementation in the schools (pp. 108-e117).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 10

2. 2b. Implementation Plan

The extent to which the applicant describes an implementation plan to create a complete continuum of solutions, including early learning through grade 12, college- and career-readiness, and family and community supports, without time and resource gaps, that will prepare all children in the neighborhood to attain an excellent education and successfully transition to college and a career, and that will significantly increase the proportion of students in the neighborhood that are served by the complete continuum to reach scale over time.

Sub Question

Strengths:

The applicant presents a graphic clearly showing a well-thought-out continuum of services the project will provide and explains that this continuum was developed to closely reflect the data from the needs assessment, segmentation analysis, and review of relevant literature. This assertion is verified in the discussion of how the needs and segmentation analyses guided the formulation of the services in the continuum (pp. e19-e27) and further explicated in two tables (pp. e161-e163) showing the links between the proposed programs and the evidence that supports them. Further the application indicates that it was designed with input from a wide range of community organizations and community members, including representatives from the school district (pp. e30-31). The application also includes a chart that identifies the specific program components that comprise the proposed continuum and also shows how each component is linked to currently operating community and school programs and to ones that will be established or scaled up as result of the proposed project (p. e32). This chart demonstrates that the applicant has designed a comprehensive program of services covering early learning through grade 12, college- and career-readiness, and family and community supports.

The application includes five tables that give a clear overview of the project implementation plan. These list the service delivery strategies of the applicant's continuum, briefly describe the programs associated with the strategies, and identify the age-group and scale-up targets for the programs by year (pp. e35-e44). The tables also identify which partner agency or organization will lead the implementation whether the programs are new ones, existing ones to be scaled-up, or existing ones the project will link with. An MOU is included that verifies the listed partners are committed to the project and its programs as well as to their responsibilities as lead implementers of the programs (pp. e108-e117). The tables are followed by a discussion describing the project's implementation goals and detailing implementation objectives by program (pp. e46-e48). The tables in combination with the discussion of goals and objectives demonstrate that the applicant has a well-structured, coherent implementation plan that takes advantage of partners' capacities and should enable the project to be carried smoothly and efficiently.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. 2c. Identification of Existing Neighborhood Assets

The extent to which the applicant identifies existing neighborhood assets and programs supported by Federal, State, local, and private funds that will be used to implement a continuum of solutions.

Strengths:

Both the description of the project's proposed implementation (pp. e35-e44) and the discussion of the implementation goals (e46-e48) identify the existing community assets the applicant intends to capitalize on. Many of these assets are programs put in place by the 15 partners the applicant has recruited to joint venture in the project financially and in terms of enhancements to or expansions of their existing programs (pp. e17; e35-e44; e46-e48; e108-e117). The joint venture commitments made by many of these partners -- such as the school district, colleges, regional development agencies, and the city government -- are linked to programs they operate that are supported by Federal, State, and local funds. Others' commitments are linked to privately funded programs, such as those operated by church-related agencies, associations, and museums (pp. e108-e117). The specificity of the commitments and the fact that the applicant has successfully gained so many in a small community attest to strong potential for leveraging community assets to implement the proposed continuum of solutions.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Sub Question

4. 2d. Implementation Plan for Absolute Priority 1

The extent to which the applicant describes its implementation plan, including clear, annual goals for improving systems and leveraging resources as described in paragraph (2) of Absolute Priority 1.

Strengths:

The application presents one implementation plan goal (Goal I) for improving the school system. This goal focuses on establishing new programs for the community's schools or adding program elements that enhance existing school programs (p. e46). It is clear and the objectives listed under it show a phased approach. The implementation plan overview tables (pp.e35-43) show annual targets for these programs.

Also, there is one implementation plan goal presented by the applicant (Goal III) that focuses on developing beyond-grant-period funds to facilitate sustainability and one objective under that goal (Objective II B) focuses on helping partners do likewise (p. e47). This indicates the applicant has considered what resources likely will need to be leveraged or established to sustain and continue the service delivery continuum. Having a specific goal for it is evidence the applicant is planning steps to ensure the program is sustained and continued.

Weaknesses:

The application does not include specific indicators or benchmarks for the annual goals or objectives for improving the community systems that it has noted play an important role in its service delivery continuum (pp. e43-e44).

Reader's Score: 3

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Services

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the services to be provided by the proposed project. In determining the quality of the project services, the Secretary considers:

Reader's Score: 9

Sub Question

1. 3a. Needs Assessment and Segmentation Analysis

The extent to which the applicant describes how the needs assessment and segmentation analysis, including identifying and describing indicators, were used to determine each solution within the continuum.

Strengths:

The applicant describes the needs assessment and segmentation analyses conducted on its behalf to pinpoint problems in the community and better customize the service continuum to meet the needs. Included in the description are overviews of the sources of the data gathered (pp. e21-e22) and a detailed discussion of each of the indicators of need (including nature and severity) uncovered in the analysis (pp.e22-e27). The application also describes the methodology used in the segmentation analysis to determine which population segments should be targeted for the continuum of services (p. e27). The application then describes the process employed by the applicant to derive programmatic solutions from the needs analysis and strategies for delivering these solutions to the neediest target populations as revealed by the segmentation analysis (pp. e48-49). There also is reference to a chart showing the alignment of strategies, programs, and target populations (p. e32). The tables on pp. e35-e45 further illustrate the relationship among needs, populations, strategies, and programs.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

In discussing the needs and segmentation analyses the applicant presents findings from a mixture of community data and county data, which weakens the case that all the needs identified in these analyses are in fact applicable to the particular community populations and specifically linked to the services described in the continuum (pp. e48-e49).

Reader's Score: 3

2. 3b. Evidence-Based Solutions

The extent to which the applicant documents that proposed solutions are based on the best available evidence including, where available, strong or moderate evidence.

Strengths:

The application relates how a field trip to the Harlem Children's Zone and the evidence of that initiative's success triggered the applicant to use it as a model for its approach, strategies, and service delivery continuum (pp. e15; e51). In addition, the applicant details a number of other successful, effective initiatives and programs (referencing their positive results) that served as models for the programs and services it is proposing to carry out (pp. e51-e53). Finally, the application provides a detailed list of the specific programs it expects to implement (pp. e140-e160); the list includes reference to the evidence indicating their success.

Weaknesses:

The application does not state whether the evidence referenced is strong, moderate, or falls under a different research model and they do not include a bibliography to enable verification of the strength of the references cited showing the effectiveness of the initiatives or programs serving as models (like the Harlem Children's Zone or The Parents as Teachers Program). (pp. e52-e53; e140-e160).

Reader's Score: 3

3. 3c. Description of Annual Goals

The extent to which the applicant describes clear, annual goals for improvement on indicators.

Strengths:

The application presents a description of the annual improvement goals the proposed project has set for itself (pp. e53-e56). The goals are further broken into yearly improvement numbers and percentages and they are detailed in a table appearing on pp. e61-e64 where they are shown to include indicators as well as the measures and methods to be used for assessing them, in most cases.

Weaknesses:

Two of the four support indicators for Goal IX, Improve Family Involvement and Community Support for Children Learning, do not include measures or methods for assessing the support indicators and without them it is unclear how the effectiveness of the indicators will be verified. (pp. e56; e63-e64).

Reader's Score: 3

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the experience, lessons learned, and proposal to build capacity of the applicant's management team and project director in all of the following areas:

Reader's Score: 40

Sub Question

1. 4a. Ability to Work with Neighborhood Residents

Experience, lessons learned, and proposal to build capacity of the applicant's management team and project director in working with the neighborhood and its residents; the schools described in paragraph (2)(b) of Absolute Priority 1; the LEA in which those schools are located; Federal, State, and local government leaders; and other service providers.

Strengths:

The application notes that the applicant has received a Federal Promise Neighborhoods planning grant which enabled it to launch joint planning sessions involving community residents, the local schools and district, and local government leaders. At the end of that grant period the applicant states a modest version of the currently proposed project was carried out and supported by these partners (p. e21). In addition, the applicant describes an organizational and management structure that revolves around oversight by a board, decision-making guided by an advisory committee, and management by a leadership team (pp. e56-e58; e65-e66). These entities are made up of a wide range of community representatives. The applicant also describes the processes to be put in place that will enable the leadership team and advisory committee to aggressively and routinely engage representatives of key partners and the community at-large. (pp. e56-e58). Finally, the applicant shows clearly in its narrative and the inclusion of an MOU that the proposed project will be a joint venture among many diverse partners representing the school district, organizations affiliated with Federal, State, and local government, a variety other service providers. Taken together this shows clearly that the applicant's management team has demonstrated capacity to work with

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not address how the project will build and sustain capacity among the individuals who are responsible for delivering the services on the ground to work effectively with the target population.

Reader's Score: 9

2. 4b. Ability to Utilize Data

Experience, lessons learned, and proposal to build capacity of the applicant's management team and project director in collecting, analyzing, and using data for decision-making, learning, continuous improvement, and accountability, including whether the applicant has a plan to build, adapt, or expand a longitudinal data system that integrates student-level data from multiple sources in order to measure progress while abiding by privacy laws and requirements.

Strengths:

The application notes the project's plan for collecting, analyzing, and using data will meet federal data requirements and stresses that the project personnel and systems will abide by privacy laws and requirements. The applicant also describes the applicant's plan to work with two partners to develop a database to enable it to follow participants, determine their progress, and track outcomes (pp. e59-60). The application presents a chart showing how the data flow will occur and the applicant notes that the data will be used by the advisory committee for decision-making, measuring accountability, and initiation of improvements (p. e60). In addition, the applicant notes that the table included on pp. e61-e64 -- besides showing goals and indicators -- names the areas where data will be collected.

Weaknesses:

The application does not explain how the data collected will be presented to the advisory committee in a way that facilitates their analysis and decision making. It also does not describe any special educational efforts to help members of this committee who are less sophisticated in the analysis and use of data to

Sub Question

guide decisions do so effectively. Lastly, although the application indicates the data will be used to hold initiatives accountable, it does not describe how this will happen operationally (pp. e59-e60).

Reader's Score: 12

3. 4c. Ability to Create Partnerships

Experience, lessons learned, and proposal to build capacity of the applicant's management team and project director in creating formal and informal partnerships, including the alignment of the visions, theories of action, and theories of change described in its memorandum of understanding, and creating a system for holding partners accountable for performance in accordance with the memorandum of understanding.

Strengths:

The application notes that one of the efforts initiated by the applicant under the auspices of its Federal Promise Neighborhoods planning grant was to begin aggressively involving community residents, the local schools and district, and local government leaders. The result was that the applicant's management team assembled 15 partners to join with the applicant to design the proposed project; to assist with its implementation by linking it to their existing programs; and also to support it financially (pp. e17; e35-e44; e46-e48; e108-e117). This indicates clearly that the management team not only has capacity to put together partnerships, but more importantly it also clearly shows that they can align the visions, theories of action, and theories of change of each of these partners to the ones of the proposed project. The MOU included with the application clearly describes the partner responsibilities and their accountabilities demonstrating that the applicant's management team has established a system for holding them accountable (pp. e108-e117).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 10

4. 4d. Ability to Integrate Funding Streams

Experience, lessons learned, and proposal to build capacity of the applicant's management team and project director in integrating funding streams from multiple public and private sources, including its proposal to leverage and integrate high-quality programs in the neighborhood into the continuum of solutions.

Strengths:

The application describes the contributions that its 15 partners have made to program design and planning, but also stresses -- and provides evidence in the MOU -- that these partners will make commitments to assist in implementation, leveraging proposed programs to enhance to or expand their own existing programs. There is also evidence that they will commit financial support as well (e35-e44; e46-e48; e108-e117). A number of these programs as operated by some of partners -- e.g., the school district, colleges, regional development agencies, and the city government -- are linked to the support of Federal, State, and local funds. And some as operated by non-government organizations -- e.g., church-related agencies, associations, and museums -- are linked to private funds. The fact that the applicant has gained their commitment to joint venture demonstrates the capacity its management team has to integrate funds from multiple funding streams in project implementation.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not describe a plan for building the internal capacity of additional members of the staff at the respective partner organizations -- i.e., staff who did not establish the current level of integration among funding streams -- to sustain and manage the current funding streams and build new ones as the project moves into the future and the federal funds no longer support it.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 9

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Comprehensive Local Early Learning Network

- 1. To meet this priority, an applicant must include a plan that proposes to expand, enhance, or modify an existing network of early learning programs and services to ensure that they are high-quality and comprehensive for children from birth through the third grade.**

Strengths:

The application presents a table describing the programs aimed at early learners it plans to implement. It includes details as to how these programs will be integrated to enhance or expand ones already in operation in the community (pp. e41-e42). In addition, the application describes the goals of the early learning programs that are part of its continuum of services (p. e53) and detail how it will measure meeting them (metrics and test instruments) and how it will know they have been met (indicators) (p. e61). It also includes a table showing the how the project plans to implement each early learning program and what age ranges each will address (p. e50). The applicant stresses that its eight early learning programs will be in the first phase of project implementation and that a coordinator (who is a state certified early childhood educator) has already been assigned for managing their implementation (p. e49).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority - Quality Internet Connectivity

- 1. To meet this priority, an applicant must ensure that almost all students in the geographic area proposed to be served have broadband internet access at home and at school, the knowledge and skills to use broadband internet access effectively, and a connected computing device to support schoolwork.**

Strengths:

The applicant did not identify this competitive preference priority for the purposes of earning competitive preference points.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not identify this competitive preference priority for the purposes of earning competitive preference points.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Arts and Humanities

- 1. To meet this priority, an applicant must include in its plan opportunities for children and youth to experience and participate actively in the arts and humanities in their community so as to broaden, enrich, and enliven the educational, cultural, and civic experiences available in the neighborhood.**

Strengths:

The applicant lists four programs among those it will carry out as part of its continuum of services that it says have arts and humanities foci (pp. e50-e51).

Weaknesses:

The application does not specifically say what the expected impacts of these programs are on children's educational, cultural, and civic experiences or detail how participating in the programs will add to opportunities for children and youth to experience and participate actively in the arts and humanities in their community (pp. e50-e51). The applicant does not address the degree to which these programs will affect opportunities for children and youth to experience and participate actively in the arts and humanities in their community in the descriptions of the project improvement goals (pp. e53-e56).

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Quality Affordable Housing

- 1. To meet this priority, an applicant must propose to serve geographic areas that were the subject of an affordable housing transformation pursuant to a Choice Neighborhoods or HOPE VI grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development during FY2009 or later years.**

Strengths:

The applicant did not identify this competitive preference priority for the purposes of earning competitive preference points.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not identify this competitive preference priority for the purposes of earning competitive preference points.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
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