



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0675TX-1 for America Can

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

In an effort to provide a learning environment for primarily minority, inner city, at-risk youth, the applicant serves low-income and mostly African-American or Latino students one or more grade levels behind and most who are the first high school graduate or college-bound members of their family.

The applicant indicates that the three core values are supported:

(1) Student-centered decision-making; (2) A rigorous curriculum based on reading and thinking skills; and (3) Fulfilling every aspect of our mission with a sense of urgency and that particular importance on the applicant's philosophy is:

- Reading is the key to empowerment, personal fulfillment, success, and employment;
- Personal responsibility, character, values, and passion lead to good citizenship; and
- Learning is best accomplished in a nurturing yet structured environment.

The applicant vision expands and clarifies:

1. Individualized education through a personalized sequence of instructional content
2. Embedded professional development to move teachers from being mere presenters of information to high quality teachers
3. A focus on rigorous academic content consistent with college and career readiness standards
4. An organizational health assessment of all levels of leadership to improve the climate and culture
5. Primarily educating the most at-risk students.

Using the 4 core assurance areas, the applicant's vision for change and the intention of ensuring a personalized learning environment per student is strong and meets the criteria across the consortium.

As written in the mission statement, CAN Academies aim to center decision-making around high-need high-risk students and develop programming to meet their individual and collective needs. This is noted to be a strong area of success for CAN Academies.

While the vision is very strong, it does not indicate how those ambitious goals will be achieved aside from the breakdown above. The extent to which the plan is comprehensive is outlined well although reservations

regarding the implementation and ability to follow through the coherent reform steps exists as it isn't fully shared.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)

10

6

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Across 10 campuses within LEAs serving an estimated total of 8,000 students and 222 educators, the applicant intends to implement programs sustained by the grant at various sites.

However, the applicant does not describe the process at all for this implementation outside of noting that the applicant "meets eligibility requirements."

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)

10

5

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

In the reform and change section, the applicant restates the purposes behind alternative education programs and shares a list of publications that support the Reuven Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment (FIE) program they would like to implement. Outside of commentary and data regarding how the program has worked or is academically meritable, the applicant does not express:

- what the high-quality plan is to reform outside of the application of FIE academically
- any district-wide (or, in this case, LEA-wide) change or steps toward change
- no logistical, procedural or policy-related steps to reaching an outcome

The applicant ensures that the program is of high repute based on information in the appendices, but a logic model or theory of change at a systemic level is absent from the narrative.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)

10

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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant lists personalized instructions that address the cognitive, affective, and academic domain (what appear to be goals) for students in general and speak to college enrollment and graduation rates toward an increasing and productive trajectory. Additionally, the applicant includes the vision in which they:

1. Develop efficient, flexible, and adaptive cognitive behaviors;
2. Create a schema of universal academic concepts and vocabulary;
3. Develop intrinsic motivation for learning and problem solving;
4. Create an extensive capacity for reflective thinking; and
5. Transform learners from passive recipients to active generators of information.

Within those, the applicant explains that LEA-wide program goals for this Race to the Top-funded are:

-to increase performance on summative assessments

However, in this chart the applicant does not indicate specifics including what increase they are aiming for, how that will be measured outside of the gathering of baseline data, the measuring of achievement and

the training and benchmark testing. Specifics regarding testing history, records of reading achievement, periodic assessment of students at least monthly and descriptions like "at least 95% of teacher on each Can campus trained in FIE" do not meet the standard for ambitious yet achievable, measurable or quantifiable goals associated with reform.

-to decrease the achievement gap

This chart reflects much of the first chart but said differently with equally inspecific information that does not support achievement quantifiably. While the applicant sets ambitious targets through performance measures for high school graduation rates, no mention of college enrollment is provided in this area.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	9
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant notes progress from 2009-2012 for the Mathematics TAKS results. The applicant notes unsteady and quite mixed progress with the 2009-2012 Reading/ELA TAKS assessment. These indicators, while in some cases successful, are attributed to a program the applicant identifies as Thinking Through Reading Across the Curriculum and doesn't indicate a strong track record of success. It is noted, however, that success is increasing.</p> <p>Additionally the applicant indicates improvement and progress in terms of reducing the drop-out rate among enrolled students but does not effectively show that student learning outcomes have improved by raising student achievement or college enrollment.</p> <p>The applicant notes ambitious achievement in San Antonio Can Academy in terms of the drop-out rate. Texans Can contracts with Argot Limited, to provide data storage, disaggregation, and dissemination of information and instructional coaches also access the data online and in print to support teachers in creating lesson plans that maximize learning time by focusing on areas of instructional need.</p> <p>Because students do not always have access to computers, their data is also available in a conveniently accessible binder and updated regularly by teachers and student advisors. This data also drives a student's tutoring plan.</p> <p>Additional data sources include Eduphoria and Lead4ward.</p> <p>Overall, the prior record of success is brief and narrow, indicating that the applicant has not provided the underlying data to support the summary remarks made in the application and because the applicant is a consortium of 5 LEA's and mutiple sites, conclusive data on the lowest achieving (as opposed to all) schools is not evidenced in this section of the application.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

Using a system called School FIRST to rate districts on 22 performance metrics relating to financial management, included are tables to indicate budgeting for personnel. Detailed information regarding actual personnel salaries at the school level for (a) all instructional and support staff, (b) instructional staff only, (c) teachers only, and (d) non- personnel expenditures are reported via the Texas Education Agency’s Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS).

Each report includes the following data: Average teacher salary by years of experience; Average actual salaries for teachers, professional support, campus administration/school leadership, and central administration; Tax information; Fund balance information; Actual revenue information by source (local tax, other local and intermediate, state, and federal); and Actual expenditure information by object (payroll, other operating, debt service, and capital outlay), by function (instruction, school leadership, etc.), and by program (bilingual/ESL, career and technical education, accelerated instruction, regular education, etc.)

No mention of budget meetings, websites, pamphlets/packets or additional measures to ensure budgeting for personnel is accurate and public was noted indicating a low-level range of transparency within the process and few points.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	7
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant reports that Texans Can Academies follow all legal, statutory and regulatory requirements for implementation of educational facilities and, within the context of being a consortium of charter campuses, school leaders are permitted more freedom in managing their school, allowing them to respond in the best interest of both parents and students in a quest to individualize student learning.

Teachers at charter schools are encouraged to structure lessons to the specific needs of their students and these successful conditions and requirements met could aid in implementation of personalized learning environments.

The applicant earns points in this area for compliance within a state context for implementation but the application did not demonstrate sufficient persuasive autonomy and decision-making abilities outside of the minimum level of compliance. It remains unclear whether the applicant only meets or exceeds these regulations as a state level and although the applicant may be high-achieving in this area, that remains to be seen within the context of the applicant so full points cannot be awarded.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	5
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicates that intensive assistance is needed by outside sources for the maintenance of programs and that stakeholders are meaningfully engaged in the process of education and as a consortium, collective bargaining rights are not mentioned clearly although through the consortium, it can be assumed they exist.

Stakeholder representatives from each Texans Can LEA were involved on a weekly basis during September and October 2012 to give input regarding system-wide and campus-specific needs and gaps and to suggest improvements and the applicant shares two tables indicating a level of stakeholder (both internal and external) involvement.

District and campus administrators also consulted with district data personnel for the latest, most up-to-date demographics and test results to ensure that planning for this Race to the Top Initiative reflected the needs of the student body, parents, families, and teachers.

Among groups such as NETS and Big Brothers and Big Sisters, stakeholders such as the public can become involved in CAN Academy life.

Of note is the 14-page section of the appendices where the applicant shares documentation bearing the signatures of teachers from each site within the consortium. This stands as strong evidence of teacher buy in although it's unclear the process and buy-in outside of these forms that is being employed. This documentation indicates the name and signature of educators who agree to the executive summary, full implementation of the programs and their wish to participate in and promote personalized learning environments.

Several letters of support are indicated although throughout the application. However, outside of the context of letters and signed forms, there exists an absence of the comments of stakeholders such as those like engaged parents, families, and financial entities in the process of education within CAN Academies in addition to pursuit of this grant. To suggest that parents or community stakeholders are not involved because high-risk alternative students no longer always reside at home or with their families suggests a missing link between site and stakeholder and one that must be in place for sustained and ongoing reform to occur.

Points are awarded based on merit of the buy-in of teachers, letters of support and the programs currently in place.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)

5

1

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did not share a high-quality plan in early stages of the application nor does the applicant indicate a plan with logistics, policy, procedure or capability now in the analysis of needs and gaps. Although a trial-run has occurred at two sites with the FIE program, the data from the pilot is not evident.

The applicant is well-versed on the needs and challenges facing the population of learners within CAN Academies but has not put a solid process in place for the implementation of reform based on such needs that could be led internally at sites and externally by the consortium without additional measures in place and a higher-quality plan to direct such an initiative.

Additionally, while the applicant includes some tables, charts and information, most often it repeats the information in narrative that does not indicate a high-quality plan of analysis but instead comments on the issues in place.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	15

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicates that Texans Can Academies were founded to help the most at-risk high school students find success and that Texans Can Academies is structured to help them do this through various measures, including:

- Learning and Development Goals Linked to College- and Career-ready Standards In Houston, for example, a larger percentage of students (83.3%) graduate with one of these top two diplomas than the average of all students across the state of Texas (82.7%). The margin is small but significant: Texans

Can students are in no way average and are, on balance, higher-need and more at-risk than almost every other Texas district or charter school. To earn a more rigorous level of diploma takes focused effort on the part students, major support from administrators and teachers, the understanding and encouragement of parents and family members, and substantial personalization of the learning environment.

- Within 8 days of enrolling, Student Advisors have accessed all existing achievement data for a given student and identified areas for remediation, acceleration, and special assistance.
- Within 15 days of enrolling, students have met with their Student Advisor and, analyzing their individual achievement data, have co-created a personal learning plan that clarifies their path to high school graduation. This plan will guide their course selection and the additional assistance required to facilitate achievement of their learning goals.

The applicant indicates that deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest spur achievement as does exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives.

Ultimately the applicant suggests that the combination of enhanced access to student achievement data, a wider variety of inputs and measures of college- and career-readiness, and system wide integration of two structured critical reading and thinking programs will help students master critical academic content and develop the 21st Century skills and traits that ensure them access to the post-secondary world of college and careers.

The applicant does not specify, however, outside of through the use of academic advising and progress reporting, how this is individualized as opposed to site-based or LEA-wide. Programs implemented at school sites are not individualized by nature although the applicant suggests through commentary, narrative and documentation within the application that a group program is individual.

Blended learning opportunities add an additional level of structure and support to this application and to teaching and learning overall.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)

20

14

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The teaching and leading section of the application is uncommonly detailed and organized with information that supports individual student learning, a higher-quality plan for implementation of learning goals, the use of programs as support instead of central curriculum, adapted content and instruction based on new and best practices and the wide use of training, policies and resources for increasing achievement by group and individually in academic environments.

The applicant indicates a quality plan for implementation connected strongly to their vision for alternative students within secondary education in this section. Additionally, this element of the application suggests strongly that student needs are the primary concern and focus of their initiatives.

However, the training, systems and various levels of policy and procedural change necessitated by a multi-site change with regard to various programs and the entire consortium for this implementation to occur effectively is not provided.

Systems and programs do not stand alone and the suggestion of blended learning necessitates systemic support and a high degree of ability to execute such a program. Within the applicant's data and narrative alignment is not discussed or provided from site to site and throughout the consortium to ultimately support a high-quality plan or collective plan for implementation of instructional redesign.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	12
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant shares a list of directors, a CIO and CEO of Texans Can Academies which indicates the administrative structure which is supported across the 5 LEA's and various sites by Principals and leadership teams.</p> <p>Students can demonstrate achievement by mastery as opposed to time and school leadership teams, as noted by the applicant, are provided a range of flexibility with what works best for their learners.</p> <p>According to the applicant, the students are given an opportunity to demonstrate mastery at various levels and multiple opportunities for evidence of mastery are provided.</p> <p>Resources and instructional practices fit the cultural and community needs of each site to address the alternative needs of the students.</p> <p>Each site works cooperatively with each LEA which guarantees and frequently checks their information, viability and programmatic development.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	6
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant indicates that (a) Access to Content, Tools, and Resources In and Out of School are available to all students regardless of ability or any other limiting factor, and asynchronous resources are available in or out of school and at any time of day, week, or year.</p> <p>All Texans Can Campuses have at least three areas where students can access online resources: 1) Credit Recovery Labs, where students can blended learning opportunities which consist of credit recovery and credit acquisition; 2) BCIS (Business Computer Information Systems) Labs that are available as space allows or when BCIS is not in session; and 3) Special Education Learning Labs and Texans Can will be deploying 120-170 netbooks per campus to allow even greater access to online learning resources in the classroom.</p> <p>Parents are invited and encouraged to participate in school events, but it must be noted that many Texans Can students are themselves, parents, married, or heads of households, and as such, their own parents are not actively involved in their educations.</p> <p>Educators are fully supported by the Texans Can central administrative staff as noted in section D1a. Students, parents, and educators, as well as other stakeholders and program partners, were represented in consultation while developing this proposal and will continue to give input on the implementation of the components contained herein but the applicant does not address how or when they were included or what their contributions to the process of the proposal were.</p> <p>(b) Technical Support</p> <p>Texans Can Academies believes in empowering school administrators, teachers, and support staff with the knowledge and skills to implement programs and technology by offering job-imbedded training, however, in the process the applicant never indicates how sharing access points, ensuring all students have access and/or bridging the gap within the communities toward access and equity will be established.</p> <hr/>		

(c) Use of Student Data in Other Formats and Systems

Texans Can Academies are in the midst of phasing in student data systems that allow more flexibility to further enhance instruction and increase student achievement. The applicant indicates this data will support achievement but does not indicate how or when teachers and administrators will allow this data to inform instruction.

(d) Interoperable Data Systems

All computing services are delivered through cloud-based application virtualization via cloud client devices or thin PC's. This allows for standardized high quality of service and reliability and though Race to the Top funding will assist all LEAs in completing this by the end of 2013, in particular, Texans Can will bring additional modules of Eduphoria online and incorporate a tracking system for grades 9-16.

The applicant is measured and all sections are complete, although at times the narrative is unspecific and vague in the procedures for determining and showing how a high-quality plan supports individualized learning in classrooms and for the purposes of college and career ready knowledge acquisition.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	8
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant's high-quality plan has yet to be identified although some elements of a plan are considerably stronger (ongoing support, instruction, and the alignment of sites to the mission). The applicant plan, however, does not indicate how sites will be aligned to each other or to the consortium as a whole.</p> <p>In the continuous improvement process, the applicant indicates an understanding that timely and regular progress toward project goals, including ongoing corrections and improvements after a grant period are required as well as publicly sharing information for the project. The applicant continues, stating that organizationally there will be a Project Manager, Direction and Executive Leadership team to comprise the Graduating Thinkers Project Leadership Team.</p> <p>The applicant identifies a timeline of implementation in year 1 but does not, again, indicate how implementation will occur during the change period or afterwards throughout the term of the grant.</p> <p>The applicant states that activity/progress response to the US Dept. of Ed will be required but does not indicate to whom or how this will be assigned and managed directly except through a leadership team to continuously improve. The information regarding timelines, benchmarks and clarity in terms of accountability is not provided.</p> <p>A table is provided which elaborates on unspecific (weekly, at least once a month and annually) timeline targets.</p> <p>Overall, while Project Director and Manager roles are present, a specific trajectory is unclear in a specific targeted way that is both transparent and quantifiable.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	1

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant identifies a "general schedule of communication" which highlights who (Project Manager, Project Director, Leadership team) will monitor progress on the Graduating Thinkers program.

Despite the strength that it is broken down weekly, monthly, quarterly, semi-annually and annually, a lack of specificity and educational targets are present.

In brief it states "The Project Manager communicates with the Executive Leadership Team regarding planning and implementation of the project," but the application, the vision, the high-quality plan and the overall continuous improvement appear to lack strength and have yet to narrow a focus down to what the implementation is and looks like and just how the implementation will be carried out among 5 LEA's in steady alignment. Also, in various sites the continuous improvement information for implementation is not provided in order to ensure individualized learning environments for students and college-career readiness.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)

5

3

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicates that it could meet several of the measures necessary but does not indicate how that will occur. While these performance measures are future targets, the implementation and procedural change required appear to be lacking.

The applicant does not indicate how it will provide rigorous, timely and formative targets for meeting criteria in any way and has yet to provide a high-quality plan for implementation in order to meet the realities of the criteria for this grant outside of the purchase of programs, which clearly do not stand alone without successful multi-site implementation plans at both a systemic and site-based level.

It's unclear which measures the applicant truly can meet because instead of indicating how and in what capacity the applicant intends to meet requirements, it comments on the purpose behind the programs or the data that support usage of the programs.

The applicant includes a chart containing information on a timeline but overall does not indicate an understanding of meeting the objectives to share and highlight performance areas that ensure continuous improvement.

A medium score is awarded as the applicant does ambitiously pursue various performance measures in and effort to target sustainable reform and a bold vision, however, indicators of the implementation and process for delivery have not been shared.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)

5

2

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Outside of relying on the programs themselves (Argot, Limited and Graduating Thinkers), the applicant does not indicate how a high-quality implementation plan, a high-quality approach to improvement or district steps, policies and procedures will resourcefully prove investments, in this case, are effective.

Additionally, a rationale for why programs are in place, what they are and what they could potentially do is shared, but the extent to which activities will be deployed productively, community partners will be engaged, reform will occur and improvement will be transparent are absent.

Schedules, structures, and policies needing to be modified to fit each programs and ensure its evaluation, revision, and interests are not evident in an effective, successful plan in this section as prepared by the applicant.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In terms of budget and sustainability, the applicant provides an identification for all funds for each project and their applicable use for project goals which will support the purpose and goals of the project although the vision does not indicate this with as much strength as the budget does.</p> <p>There is a rationale for various components of the project as well as 6 letters of support to defend its purpose, budget and work.</p> <p>The applicant makes its strongest case for funding through a budget that sufficiently supports the grant period and beyond which focuses on the strategies and aims of the programs for individual students.</p> <p>The budget, however, must be adequately supported and backed up with evidence to truly drive home the high-quality plan, the vision and the continuous improvement goals in order to ensure an individualized learning environment and college-career preparation for each individual student. The budget alone cannot ensure this occurs without the support and contribution of a high-quality plan, a strong unified vision and data in equal measure.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	6
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has a plan for purchase of programs and an identification of uses of each. A high-quality implementation plan has yet to be noted beyond the term of the original grant which indicates the schedules, structures and specific targets and goals of each program in unison or alone to support the investment of the grant.</p> <p>Included are various letters of support from throughout south Texas for Texans Can Academy programs and various resumes and the signature of each teacher within the schools that Texans Can operates who intend to use grant money for programming signed in October of 2012. While these are some indication of potential sustainability and the buy-in of private stakeholders, they do not merit full and continued sustainability alone.</p> <p>Support is noted for a unique set of programs involved in the applicants rationale. A budget for three years post grant is not as specific as the general budget and neither the general or the three-year post grant budget effectively and persuasively articulate the use of funding comprehensively. Outside support is recognized but not sustainable ultimately after a set time. The budget assumes given sources and funds will materialize and there is lacking evidence that this will occur with certainty.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	8
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant includes details and clarity in terms of funding use and goals associated with individualized learning environments and the maximum impact and problem solving abilities the grant could outline.</p> <p>The applicant shares a Memorandum of Understanding signed by parties within the consortium as well as performance measures, tables of population groups and desired results from each and strategies the</p>		

applicant employs to engage families, assess progress, resolve challenges, and create a decision-making progress but does not describe the partnerships or the levels of systemic interreliance the applicant has with partners.

The applicant also shares a

- scaling model and plan for improving results over time
- a structured approach to replication
- possible growth models (one new school per year bases on organization's capacity to grow)
- teacher recruitment and retention (staffing considerations)
- facilities plan (including various stakeholders)
- the integration of others services (by agencies) within the applicants program

While full points cannot be awarded due to some weaknesses in the implementation process and engagement, this is a strong portion of the application and a better-quality plan for implementation.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant can provide specific information as to why Graduating Thinkers and FEI are credible, viable and necessary programs for at-risk students in alternative settings throughout the consortium, the applicant meets the academic needs of each student, increases the effectiveness of educators and expands student access to effective educators proving this throughout their plan and vision.

It is noted that the structures and plans guiding implementation and through their vision of continuous improvement and documentation are works in progress and progressing. It is worthwhile to note, also, the applicant intends to make these sweeping changes and improve educational equity and individualized learning environments with the resources being applied for.

While absolute priority 1 is met and the applicant shares a Memorandum of Understanding from the consortium which is quite specific and detailed to support the investment of the grant, no high-quality plan exists to stand alone and be implemented within sites individually to guarantee the personalized learning environment of its own volition.

Furthermore, while programs can and might do what they intend, it is the formation and configuration of the people behind the program who are set up for success or failure that will either justify its use and purpose, ensuring its investment, or not, but either way, programs cannot remain in force and operate effectively without the necessary compelling vision, an implementation blueprint, measures in place and the support of stakeholders (students, parents, families, private funding, and various publics) to contribute to a transparent program that ensures a personalized learning environment for students.

Particularly true for students who find themselves at risk or at their last public option for an education, because of the strength of the consortium and the various LEA policies supporting the application as well as the flexibility provided per alternative setting, it's understandable that alternative settings will necessitate differences among them and individualized student learning can and will become priority at each site.

Overall, the applicant's documentation and information shows absolute priority 1 is met as individualized learning environments for students can be determined evidenced by the information and data shared.

Ultimately, however, it's critical to mention that those environments will need robust support and well-crafted implementation procedures to truly inform instruction and create the individualized learning environments that the scope lays out.

Total	210	130
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0675TX-2 for America Can

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>America Can - Texas Can describes the reform vision as one that is student centered, building on rigorous content and evaluation system. Serving most at risk students, Texas Can seeks to expand opportunities for students who have struggled in traditional setting. The reform vision has a focus on individualized education in form of developing cognitive behaviors and reduce learning gaps, staff development for teachers to better mediate cognitive behaviors, rigorous academic content, as well as organizational health assessment. The reform vision states tightening standards and adopting additional assessment. It is not clear what tightening of standards mean. Adopting assessment is beneficial to tracking student progress, but it is not clear if this is built on the current assessment or adopting brand new assessments, and if these assessments will address the cognitive behaviors or specific needs. There will be a new teacher and principal evaluation system in place based on LEA's vision of instructional improvement. The applicant does not elaborate on what those instructional improvements are and how they will be connected to student learning. Applicant is vague in how the reform will specifically help student achievement. This qualifies the applicant for a top score of the medium range.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>American Can - Texas Can selects all schools in the five collaborating LEAs for the plan. All 10 schools from 5 LEAs have met the criteria for this proposal. Applicant has provided a list of schools with information regarding socio economically disadvantaged status as well as number of students at each campus. Applicant does not indicate the process used to identify the participating schools and students. Applicant receives a high score in the medium range.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

American Can - Texas Can describes the program that will be used to provide the high quality reforms. A detailed background research is provided about the reading program and the intervention program for low functioning students which will be the foundations of the reform. The intervention program was piloted in 2011-2012 in two high schools. The pilot was to measure only teacher efficacy and control in classroom, and was not focused on student achievement. Unfortunately the results of the pilot is not detailed, and only shows that the initial promising results showed increased teacher ability to impact student learning in all subjects. There is no data to support the initial promising results in student achievement. Applicant fails to detail how the use of the programs will help with the reform proposal. Also it is not clear if a grade level teacher was targeted or the teachers at both sites participated in the pilot. Due to insufficient data describing how the proposal will translate into meaningful reform to support change at all 10 sites, this section qualifies for a medium score.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	6
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

American Can - Texas Can highlights the challenges facing the schools. Texas Can includes tables to show timelines, deliverable and tasks assigned to help with student achievement with targeted growth. The targeted growths are for all sites and not specific to each site, as each may be at a different place during the implementation. There is data to support the reform goal in increasing student achievement for the life of the grant, but the data is not site specific. This is assuming all sites will achieve the same goals. The information provided for decreasing achievement gap is also overall and not by school site. Same pattern is shared regarding graduation rate and college enrollment. There is insufficient information on the charts provided. Texas can is given the high score in the medium range.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	11

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

American Can - Texas Can details student success since 2009. Scores indicate growth in student achievement despite the challenges students face. Students show higher gains in English Language Arts than Math. Data does not include closing the achievement gap. A table indicates number of LEP and SED student in all 5 LEAs. Data does not include schools or grade level results in reading and math. Data is very general and not specific for site and grade level. Student graduation rate is comparable to that of the state and it is detailed by each school. The LEAs also encourage students to graduate with higher-credit-diplomas. To support this ambitious but achievable goal for high school graduating students, the LEAs provides an additional year of support. By providing the additional support, students will feel empowered to do better. Three out of five schools also show increase in college ready numbers. This is the only data that indicates LEA information. There is no data from the sites. Student drop out rate also has decreased and this too is supported by data. Students assessment data is accessible to parents, students and teachers. Students can also access the data through binders that are being maintained by teachers and student advisors. The section receives a high score in the medium range.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Texas Ed Agency uses a system known as School First for financial management, informing public of the status of each District. Table including 5 LEAs assets, liabilities, and excess assets is enclosed. Applicant

has included personnel salaries instructional and non personnel expenditures by school site, as well as LEA's financial audit report. This section receives a high score.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

American Can - Texas can is an open enrollment Charter School. Applicant details the autonomy provided to Charter Schools to operate and the mission of Charter Schools. Applicant also indicates fewer laws and restrictions for charter schools vs regular public schools. There is more flexibility to adapt to the educational needs of the students. The autonomy under Charter School provisions provides the opportunities to implement personalized learning environment. This section receives a high score.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	5
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

America Can - Texas Can indicates involvement of the stakeholders in the process for two months (September and October). A table is provided listing the stakeholders' groups who were involved in the process. Letters of support from community members, agencies and organizations are included. Very short window of time, two months, was spent to plan and involve the stake holders in the process. It is not clear if every stakeholder had a chance to participate and voice their opinion, concern or ask questions during that time. There is no evidence to support the collective bargaining representation or if the LEA lacks a bargaining representation. This section receives a score in mid range.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	1
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

America Can - Texas Can details basic need in teacher and staff training. The focus is on incorporating the cognitive intervention program and the reading program, student data system and improving teacher retention. The cognitive intervention program is explained and supported by research, but there is not enough evidence to support the effectiveness of the program in Texas Can Schools. The program was piloted in two schools during 2011-2012 school year, but besides an initial survey results to support teacher efficacy, there is no data to support student learning. The Reading Program will support student reading fluency and comprehension as well as meta-cognition and ability to read for information, providing personalized learning for students. Data base will provide information for any supplemental testing, providing information to help students with better data to monitor their progress, and help teachers teach better. There is no data to support the analysis of the needs and the gaps. There is a chart indicating the need to train teachers and provide incentives to help teachers stay with the LEA. Small teaching staff is very helpful, but difficult teaching environment results in high teacher turn over rate. This section receives a low score.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	16

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

America Can - Texas Can - Details the extend of the student understanding of the goals and key to their success, and gives explanation of how this understanding and information available to students early in the year and throughout the year, helps them achieve their goal and stay committed to their learning. It is clear that the plan will provide a second chance to at risk students to get back in school and work towards graduation,

by providing students with the personalized attention. Even though learners have an understanding of the goals, they will need constant help and support to meet those goals. This support will be provided by teachers, analyzing data and monitoring students' learning and making instructional decisions. To deepen the learning experiences, the online component of the plan will supplement the core content areas to motivate and engage students in learning. Students will use the notebooks and technology provided. Credit recovery and acquisition is available. Delivery of specific strategies to provide rigorous college ready studies are not addressed. Through developing relationships with adults and peers to help get through school, students develop skills to communicate better and learn to be a team player.

The personalized content delivery is explained through a table. On-line instructional tools will provide the sequence of instructional content and skills to help teach at risk students including English Learners. Student advisors will use the system to analyze data, providing students with feedback on their progress. The importance of providing training to the staff and administrators to use the resources and be able to provide the support to students is addressed. There are evidence to support personalize learning through individual support and attention to student outcome, training and on going support for data analysis and staff development. There are no details provided to outline instructional strategies to provide rigorous standards. This section receives a medium score in high range.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)

20

15

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

American Can - Texas Can describes steps in staff development including mentoring and providing support to teaching staff to help create the personalized plan for students. This will help teachers to better meet the students' need as they are supported and empowered in addressing student learning through blended learning, and behavior issues. Teachers are receiving support and training, this may help retain teachers. Experienced and trained teachers, getting to know the students they are working with, utilizing data base to monitor student learning, and utilizing on-line resources, will provide consistent learning opportunities to the at risk students. Evidence is provided to support the successful implementation through assessment of data and setting individual teaching and learning goals.

Reading program and behavioral program, may provide college and career-ready opportunities. Differentiated instruction and student learning is addressed partially through the reading program as it will provide targeted instruction. An advantage in having a small staff throughout the LEA and everyone receiving same kind of training is that it will help create a network between teachers and principals as they support one another through this process. A low score in high range is given to this section.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	13

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

American Can - Texas Can provides a list of central office staff, titles and responsibilities that will support the plan. The structure of personnel at each site is also described. Because each site has a small staff, collaboration will be easier to synchronize learning across the LEA and to provide ample mastery opportunities to all students. In addition staff will also feel supported, as they are provided the training and

support to help their students through staff development and peer support. They will provide feedback to students to show mastery in quarterly intervals, and help motivate the learners to stay the course. The flexibility and the structure of the charter schools provide a setting to cater to specific needs of the school in form of training the staff, adapting and accessing learning resources. Meeting the instructional needs of English Learners and students with IEPs are addressed through blended learning. Multiple opportunities for mastery of content, and assessment will be available. Cognitive learning will be addressed through implementation of the program, but the phase of the staff development to ensure successful implementation of the program is not outlined. Given the plan and the implementation steps, this section receives a medium score in the high range.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

American Can - Texas Can describes the accessibility of the labs in the community for students to be able to access the resources they need. The three labs will provide equal access to content and learning tools to support the learners. On line resources will help address the academic questions and provide intervention. Schools also will have notebooks, which will give students access to blended learning while on campus. There is no detailed information as to how the labs will be accessed or students encouraged to use the resources. To engage parent support, applicant states that parent participation is low, due to many students themselves being parents. Applicant does not address any plans to support students who are also parents. Job embedded training, using computer based courses will help teachers learn without having to leave their classrooms. The use of Eduphoria is outlined, this data system will provide the much needed access to data and learning. This system is in the its implementation stages and funds from the grant will be used to complete the implementation in all sites. As this is a powerful tool to support student learning, applicant does not provide any data to support how the use of the system at some of the sites have been successful. Due to some incomplete support information score is in the high range of medium scores.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	9

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

America Can - Texas Can provides a detailed outline of progress monitoring through weekly meetings and generating reports. A table detailing tasks, goals, people responsible and the timeline are provided. Observation, surveys and evaluation process will be used throughout the process. Applicant does not specify guidelines that are used for observation and surveys. Applicant does not address how the data from surveys and observations will be aggregated and segregated to show student progress. Applicant does not address how the generated reports will be used to monitor student progress. Applicant does not address how the data is shared with public and the stakeholders. Based on the information presented, this section receives a score in the medium range.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

America Can- Texas Can does not include a criteria for the communication and engagement process. Applicant states meetings are scheduled to provide communication between the program manager and leadership team, even central office. Applicant does not address how student progress, data showing student progress will be shared in the meetings. There are steps in place to communicate internally. This section receives a score in the bottom of medium range.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>America Can - Texas Can provides performance measure for all students in 9-11th grades as well as sub group data in science, math and ELA. In addition to the data provided for target growth, additional performance measures show students' progress towards college and career readiness is also included. These additional performance measures will show increases in percentages of students: meeting end of the course standards, graduating with distinguished achievement, taking PSAT and showing increased sense of self efficacy. This section receives a high score.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>America Can - Texas Can details the plan to effectively evaluate and monitor the program through classroom instruction, assessment and data system. Reading program and the cognitive behavior support program will support classroom instruction and criterion referenced tests will measure the success. For College and career preparation, meeting the standards for distinguished achievement program diploma and the number of college ready application will provide effectiveness data. Through data logs, frequency of access and use of student and school data will be monitored. Salary incentives will help retain teachers. The steps outlined directly is reflective of data based on student learning, access to data and achieving college and career ready criteria. However there is no data shared to support the professional development and activities. Applicant does not mention any additional staff development requirements incase one is needed and the funds or programs to support that.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant has included annual audit reports for the 5 LEAs and they have all qualified for standard achievement rating. Funds to support the plan are only through Race to the Top funding. The funding is reasonable to support the implementation of the proposal. The funds are used for personnel, contracts and supplies. There is no funding specified for the notebooks. It is not clear if the LEAs currently own the notebooks. All funds will be used for ongoing operational costs. The section receives a score at the bottom of high range.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	9
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant states the CEO of Texans Can Academies together with the executive leadership team will meet to address sustainability and review the progress. Financial funding from state, local technology funding and local philanthropists in each city will help sustain the instructional resources and technology access. The plan does not specify the amount of these funds. There is a list of community businesses, colleges and universities whose partnership is either in place or is being pursued to provide grants, highly effective teachers, tutoring and student access to earn dual credits. This section receives a high score.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	7
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant describes developing partnerships with community stakeholders. The partnership includes community support for fundraisers, technology grant and state or community college support for student learning. A list of the community support providers is provided. To further the partnership with businesses and non profit organizations, applicant will work on developing these partnerships and encourage school and District leadership to also pursue these partnerships. The goal is to involve the local businesses in the process of helping students achieve their highest potential. Applicant provides information on the desired results for students academic success as well as their readiness for college. The plan to build strong community partnership has evidence to support student learning and moving students forward to become college and career ready.</p>		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant was able to detail the need for reform in the academies. Applicant stated the goals for reform without current practice support and data to built on. The four core educational assurances were not addressed. The plan lacked evidence of detailed implementation and assessment guidelines for evaluation. Student learning is individualized using reading and cognitive behavior programs to help them along the way. There is sufficient data to support needs for staff development and the plan to provide that through on line technology is noted. However the applicant does not address how the training will happen when students are in class learning and if there were any alternative plans in modifying the day for the students, so that teachers can access the staff development. There are strengths in plan that outlines community involvement in supporting students in the LEA. It appears that there should be more detailed support in place to address family, living conditions and access to resources, economic status in order for students to be able to focus on learning and moving forward. Providing tutoring, and community labs are good resources. There is no indication of how the students will be encouraged to use those resources or any other resources available. To monitor the plan, details of meetings between project and plan managers are listed. This evaluation plan falls short of addressing how administrators and teachers are involved in the process and what standards they should be working towards attaining. Overall plan lacks strong guidelines for the implementation of the reform.</p>		

Total	210	152
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Race to the Top - District



Technical Review Form

Application #0675TX-3 for America Can

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Texans Can describes a comprehensive and coherent reform effort and vision based on the four core assurance areas through the following clear and credible goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expanding their basic skills program to give students information they need to apply to and succeed in post-secondary institutions and the workplace, • expanding their data system to measure student growth and provide data to teachers and principals to guide instruction, • developing a Human Capital Management System to develop faculty and administrative talent and to evaluate more accurately teacher and leader performance, and • continuing to address the low-achieving, at-risk students it currently serves. 		
(A)(2) Applicant’s approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>TC’s reform proposal will support high-level and school-level implementation.</p> <p>(a) They refer to Texas Can as the "umbrella designation" to represent its ten campuses of the five collaborating LEAs; however they do not provide any other descriptions they used or will use to select schools to participate.</p> <p>(b) A list of schools is provided.</p> <p>(c) All of their schools meet eligibility requirements and all schools will participate (8,041 students, 95% low-income, 94% at-risk).</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	2
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>TC does not adequately include a high-quality plan to describe how the reform proposal will be scaled up into meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools and how it will help them reach their outcome goals. They refer to a piloted program implemented during the 2011-12 school year at two schools that would be targeted for all of their schools through this grant (based on teacher beliefs - not student achievement); however, they do not describe other specific activities, timelines, deliverables and responsible parties that will scale up their proposals.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>TC’s vision will more than likely result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity, as demonstrated in their ambitious yet achievable goals. They have developed specific, high-quality plans for each of these four goal areas that include activities, deliverables, responsible parties, and timelines to ensure they will remain on target toward implementing their vision. Some of their strategies include the following:</p>		

- (a) Gather baseline data, identify gaps, train teachers in FIE, and conduct benchmark testing with the goal of raising student performance by 5% each year.
- (b) Follow similar strategies listed in (a) with additional work in developing individualized reading plans and other interventions for students requiring more assistance.
- (c) Create individual graduation plans and extend opportunities for credit recovery and acceleration courses, thereby increase graduation rates each year by 5% for all students and subgroups: Black, Hispanic, and White.
- (d) Increase college enrollment rates by 25% each year with several activities involving surveys, campus visits, and post-graduation placement data.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	12
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>TC demonstrates an impressive record of success in aggregate reading and math scores in the past four years.</p> <p>(a) They use charts to present that over the past four years the aggregate scores improved in math by 19 percentage points and reading by 10 points. They do not, however, present disaggregated data among their subgroups to demonstrate success over time in closing achievement gaps. Nor do they provide data on rates regarding high school graduation and college enrollment.</p> <p>(b) TC presents examples of its ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-performing schools within the context that all of its schools consist of high-risk students who do not succeed in traditional high schools. As a result of their work, these students experience successes: they have graduated over 12,400 students, 72-82% of the Class of 2010 graduated with the Recommended or Distinguished Achievement diplomas, and from 2008 to 2010 the dropout rate decreased from 7% to as high as 46.7%.</p> <p>(c) TC's student information system allows teachers, students and parents access to student performance data. For students and parents without computers, TC maintains easily accessible binders that are updated regularly by teachers and advisors.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>TC describes the state's system, School FIRST, as its means of reporting financial data. Information for personnel listed in (a) - (d) is reported through the Texas Education Agency's Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS).</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

TC is a consortium of charter schools whose very nature, as determined by a 1995 revision of the Texas Education Code, gives them fewer statutory and regulatory requirements than public schools. For example, they are open-enrollment charter schools which are granted flexibility to adapt to the educational needs of individual students. They report they have more freedom managing their schools, and they can respond in the best interest of parents and students. They describe sufficient autonomy to implement their personalized learning environments, as exemplified in two of their reform proposals: Thinking Through Reading Across the Curriculum and Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)

10

7

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

TC provides evidence of engaging stakeholders in developing the proposal.

(a) They describe weekly meetings during September and October 2012 during which time stakeholder representatives had opportunities to provide feedback and suggestions. Parents and students were invited to participate in the initial planning and to give feedback on direction and content at regular intervals during the application development. However, TC does not describe the level of response, if any, from students and parents; they only mention they were invited.

(ii) The appendix contains photocopies of teacher signatures from each school attesting to the fact they have read and supported the RTT grant proposals.

(b) Also included in the appendix are copies of letters from the Mayors of Dallas, Fort Worth, and Houston; Big Brothers Big Sisters of Houston; and other local agencies and organizations.

There were no letters of support, however, from parents, PTAs or student organizations.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)

5

3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

TC refers the reader to their high-quality plan found in Section (A) for the analysis and implementation of their first need - expanding rigorous curriculum content. In this section they present two other needs and gaps but do not include a high-quality plan for current or future needs assessments.

TC provides rationale and logic for ways in which the personalized environments will be enriched through their goals; however, it does not describe using student performance data to identify further needs and gaps.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	15
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>TC outlines a coherent, comprehensive approach to implementing instructional strategies for their students that is rigorous and aligned to college and career ready requirements, along with support for student needs.</p> <p>(a)(i) TC reports the desire of all students to re-focus their lives to attain a diploma and entrance to careers or college.</p>		

- (ii) Currently, TC staff gather necessary data on each student to develop a personalized learning plan. This grant will enable them to expand their resource materials regarding college and career readiness through ACT's products.
 - (iii) TC intends to extend online curriculum and content by deploying up to 160 netbooks per campus.
 - (iv) Students come from diverse populations, so their daily interactions expose them to other cultures and perspectives. In addition, the schools' curriculum includes topics of relevance to these students.
 - (v) The centerpiece of TC's academic goal places heavy emphasis on student acquisition of critical thinking skills.
 - (b)(i) TC's digital learning tools are designed to assist students with their individualized needs and to move them toward credit recovery and ultimately graduating on time career and college ready.
 - (ii) Instructional approaches include face-to-face instruction, online learning programs, one-on-one tutoring, and small group support.
 - (iii) TC utilizes four digital learning tools: GradPoint, Tell Me More, Write to Learn, and MyFoundationsLab.
 - (iv)(A)-(B) TC contracts with Argot Limited for its student data management system, which provides data to determine academic progress. Student advisors utilize student data files to guide students toward courses of study based on student strengths and weaknesses and preparation for work or post-secondary learning.
 - (v) TC students have access to online credit recovery programs and other instructional methods and supports.
 - (c) TC advisors and staff regularly schedule training sessions for students new to their schools.
- TC's plan, however, does not provide enough information to be considered high-quality. While it lists activities, it does not include specific timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties as to how the plan will be carried out.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	15
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

TC's professional development plans and support are designed to improve instruction and increase their capacity to support career and college-ready standards through personalized learning and teaching for all students.

- (a)(i) TC employs instructional specialists who serve as coaches to help teachers improve their pedagogy, and they assign mentors to guide new teachers or teachers new to their system. Both sets of individuals provide assistance in helping teachers design personalized learning experiences for students.
- (ii) TC's digital learning content lends itself to adaptability to meet the individual cognitive and interest needs of students.
- (iii) TC describes a series of standardized and local assessments they use to measure and monitor student progress toward meeting career and college readiness standards (e.g., the state's mandated

testing, end-of-course content exams, weekly common assessments). Their plan to administer ACT assessments and career inventories will move students closer to these standards, as well.

(iv) TC incorporates the state's approved instrument for teacher performance appraisal, modifying to their purposes by focusing on specific evidence of teachers addressing thinking and reading skills in each lesson.

(b)(i) TC's advisors gather data and place students in appropriate courses where teachers can utilize digital tools to meet individual student needs.

(ii) In addition to its digital learning tools (GradPoint, Tell Me More, MyFoundationsLab), TC's goal through this grant is to expand its reading and critical thinking instruction through the systemic implementation of Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment Program and Thinking Through Reading Across the Curriculum.

(c)(i) TC cites the combination of the Teacher Evaluation System, instructional coaching observation and feedback, and its Organizational Health Survey on culture and climate as informational sources to improve teacher effectiveness.

(ii) TC relies on its instructional coaches and mentors to train teachers in the educational programs, practices and initiatives it provides students.

(d) Much of TC's staff comes from Teach for America whose members often leave TC schools upon completion of their two-year commitment. The TC CMO has applied for a Teacher Incentive Fund grant to retain highly effective teachers.

TC's plan, however, does not provide sufficient information to be considered high-quality. For example, they provide time frequencies when discussing the administration of assessments but not when it comes to a timeline for implementing the assessment program. When they describe how educators will have access to tools, data, and resources, they talk about students enrolling in online courses without describing a plan as to what activities need to occur to train teachers, a timeline when that will happen, the deliverables, and the responsible parties. These aspects of a high-quality plan are not addressed thoroughly in this section.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	13

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

TC describes a supportive central administration and infrastructure to implement its goals.

(a) The application lists ten central office administrators, ranging from the CEO to the Director of Teacher Mentoring, who are committed to providing support and services to participating schools.

(b) Each school has leadership teams consisting of the principal, assistant principal, instructional specialists, teacher mentors, and student advisors. It is unclear to what extent individual schools have flexibility and autonomy over schedules, calendars, personnel decisions, and roles and responsibilities.

(c) Students can progress and earn credit based on mastery in their online courses.

(d) Students have opportunities to demonstrate mastery through TC's online credit recovery and credit acquisition courses, as well as face-to-face instruction with teachers.

(e) Most TC students arrive credit deficient and the system is designed to move them toward graduation. ELL and students with disabilities receive individualized, self-pace learning experiences.

TC describes practices and programs for meeting the unique needs of its students, but there was insufficient information on current or proposed policies guiding their decisions.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)

10

7

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

TC presents well-defined plans to support project implementation through policies and infrastructure to provide stakeholders support and resources they need. Some of them include the following:

(a) TC students have access to the content, tools and resources through three learning labs, online or face-to-face learning experiences, and all of the support available in each school. Parents are invited and encouraged to attend school activities.

(b) Training is given to all teachers and administrators in the technology and curricular tools available to them.

(c) TC describes its plan to implement additional software (Eduphoria) to enhance teacher access to student data.

(d) TC currently does not have interoperable data systems, but it plans to have full integration by the end of 2013.

However, they do not describe their plan within the context of a high-quality plan: besides the activities, there is insufficient information on the timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
TC describes its high-quality plan that includes strategies, activities, responsible parties, timelines, and deliverables. The entire plan appears to be comprehensive in its attempt to provide timely and regular feedback on progress and opportunities for corrections and improvements. It includes information on who will monitor, measure and share the information.		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
TC presents a clear and high-quality approach to improve its plan continuously by maintaining high levels of communication. Their strategy involves meeting weekly, monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, and annually to monitor progress and fidelity with personnel up and down the organization.		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:		
TC describes ambitious yet achievable performance measures, overall and by subgroup, with annual targets for required and applicant-proposed performance measures. These measures appear to be appropriate for the grant's program goals and objectives.		
(a) - (c) Each of the measures include sound rationale, the ways in which they will provide necessary information required by the grant, and the potential for improving the measurement if needed.		

TC has the sufficient number of performance measures.		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5
(E)(4) Reviewer Comments: TC describes a clear and high-quality approach to evaluating the effectiveness of its RTT funded activities. They plan to use internal and external (Argot) reviewers to conduct qualitative and quantitative evaluations of their academic curriculum supports, including teacher training for the TTRAC and FIE programs, college and career preparations, data integration, and teacher incentive program.		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: TC's budget fully identifies the funds needed to implement their proposals and a rationale for their investments and priorities. The budget appears reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of their proposal.		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	7
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: TC presents well-developed goals for sustainability after the term of the grant focusing on three critical components of their proposals (Graduating Thinkers program, data collection and use, and improved teacher retention). They indicate the responsible parties will lie with the CEO, Executive Leadership Team, and the Graduating Thinkers Project Director. However, their plan earns points on the high end of the middle range for lacking specifics regarding their timelines and deliverables.		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	10
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: TC demonstrates a commitment to integrate public and private resources in a partnership to enhance their resources, giving students and family support for their emotional and behavioral needs. (1) TC lists eleven different local businesses, youth agencies, and universities with which they have partnered and received a wide array of resources: technology tools, student programs, tutoring, and emotional/social support. (2) TC identified eight population-desired results that include educational results and other education outcomes. (3)(a) - (b) TC's project directors will conduct extensive program evaluation, using quantitative and qualitative data, to track progress for these indicators. (c) - (d) TC plans to create additional Texans Can Academies in existing LEAs to expand services to more at-risk students in their current cities. TC has an extensive list of requirements for its growth plans.		

- (4) TC staff works individually with students to integrate their educational program with other services. Referrals are made to local agencies and organizations.
- (5)(a) TC describes plans to assess the needs and assets of students and their schools, linked to their program proposal: personalized education, embedded professional development, and rigorous academic content tied to college and career ready standards.
- (b) TC plans to use their Organizational Health Survey to identify the needs and assets of the school and community.
- (c) TC describes plans to identify key staff members who will serve as gatekeepers of the project, meeting regularly to provide updates and select, implement and evaluate supports.
- (d) TC continues to invite and encourage parental participation and involvement in its activities.
- (e) TC demonstrates a commitment to assess its progress in implementing its proposals on a regular basis.
- (6) TC identifies its annual ambitious yet achievable performance measures.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:		
<p>Texans Can has met Absolute Priority 1 with a coherent and comprehensive approach to building the core educational areas in their charter schools. They work with a group of students with unique and compelling stories who cannot succeed in a traditional high school setting. Texans Can provides each of their students a personalized educational program with support. Their implementation of the Graduating Thinkers program is designed to improve their students' critical thinking skills, using a scientifically research-based program with a proven track record, and their digital credit recovery and credit acquisition courses personalize students' educational experiences while moving them toward graduation and the world of work or post-secondary learning.</p>		

Total	210	174
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