



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0050KY-1 for Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>This is an extremely ambitious vision. An exhaustive description of the four core educational assurances are provided. A clear approach to outlining goals, steps, challenges, and a process was described. Personalized learning was at the forefront of the vision provided.</p> <p>An extensive description of the high school without walls concept was provided as well as the systems to expand personalized learning across districts; however, the description of personalized learning for the elementary / middle school aged child was limited. Programs were identified as was the trainer but no additional information was provided.</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>All 17 school districts in Northern Kentucky were invited to participate and all students/subjects/grade spans will participate as well. The list of schools participating is documented and 14 of the 17 school districts signed on for participation. 44% of the students are classified as low income and 58% are identified as high-need. The District's description regarding its approach to implementation is ambitious and complete.</p>		
<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Elements of an ambitious high-quality plan are well documented. A thorough description of scaling up was provided and the concept that this grant proposal is being used as a potential model for state/national reform definitely lends itself to scaling up for meaningful reform beyond the walls of this consortium. Personalized learning, high standards, a focus on high school graduation, college and career readiness, and access for all students is described in thorough detail.</p>		
<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>
<p><b>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The performance growth on the summative assessments are equal to the state projected targets. The LEA identified sub-group targets following the same model as the established performance targets within the state. Graduation rate targets are reasonable and appropriate as 6% to 15% growth target is set between 2012 and 2017. The Hispanic sub-group, however, notes a decreased goal. This is not ambitious; however, achievable. Sub-group data was not provided for college enrollments as the state of Kentucky does not disaggregate by subgroups.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Data is provided to demonstrate increased achievement between 2007 and 2013 on the ACT. State assessment comparative data is provided for 2007 - 2011 and reports an increase in academic achievement. 2012 data is reflective in</p>		

a new state assessment; therefore, it can not be used comparatively. However, achievement gains and decreased referrals were noted as a result of an introduction of counselors in 2012 - 2013 in the lowest performing schools. MAP scores were used to evaluate the growth. Infinite Campus provides information to students, parents, and educators; however, the District lacks information pertaining to how parents are afforded the information if they do not have access to the internet. The description provided is limited when addressing ways in which the student performance data is accessible to all stakeholders as well as informs data driven instruction.

<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**  
 The LEA reported that the salary information is available on individual websites, school report cards, and on the Department of Education website. It is noted that each district publishes an annual financial report. Only 6 out of the 14 Districts participate in the Civil Rights Data Collection. The description is limited in describing a high level of transparency.

<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
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**(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:**  
 The LEA adequately described how state mandates and legislation will support the reform initiatives outlined within the proposal. However, the LEA's description of autonomy is vague and limited in regard to personalized learning, data initiatives, and UPLINKS implementation.

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>
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**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**  
 The LEA outlined an extensive and complete process for engaging meaningful stakeholders to gain support. Collective bargaining units and non-collective bargaining units were included. An effective communication plan was implemented and shared with all 17 school districts. Stakeholder support was documented through the letters submitted. Students, government, higher education, and community based groups are represented. However, several letters were written by individuals with a vested interest in the grant proposal and several letters reflect a form letter style. It is unclear if the letters of support actual represent support following a review of the plan.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>

**(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:**  
 A High Quality Plan is evidenced in this response. However, some of the details related to the specifics of the plan remain vague at the elementary level. Minimal descriptions are provided about the personalized services at the middle school level. The District addresses high quality strategies and high quality content; however, there is no system for identifying how the level of high quality will be determined. The access to data and use of that data for personalized learning is comprehensive. Digital learning is at the core of the personalized learning experiences at the high school level - especially for those students in non-traditional learning environments. The role of the support staff within various components of this plan is discussed; however, the response is vague in supporting the highest levels of critical thinking, teamwork, and creativity for students. It is unclear as to how all of these supports are going to result in effective implementation as opposed to initiative overload.

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>
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**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**  
 Elements of a high quality plan are evidenced throughout this response. The focus of college and Career readiness, graduation requirements, personalized learning, and access for all students is described in detail. The training that will be provided to staff is extensive - especially in the area of teacher evaluation and technology/data systems. A comprehensive plan is outlined. Personalized Learning Advisors, College and Career Advisors, an annual summer symposium and NKCES

professional development support via telephone hotlines, expert guidance, leadership networks, online and in person training, etc.... is described in comprehensive detail. The training is intended to hire and retain highly effective teachers. A plan to provide hard to staff speciality areas in small schools was discussed.

References to high quality resources is noted and it is expected to be contained within Uplinks; however, more detail is needed. In addition, it is noted that data will drive instructional decision making; however, the response is vague as to how the resources will be matched to student needs and specifically what resources will be available for such a connection.

It is unclear as to how all of these supports are going to result in effective implementation as opposed to initiative overload. The high quality plan is very ambitious; however, elements do not seem achievable: (ie... 100% of students enrolled in the Education Center will graduate by age 18 meeting college and career ready benchmarks.)

#### D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>Evidence of established leadership teams is provided by the LEA. The Kentucky Education Reform Act has ensured the existence of councils at each school level and UPLINKS initiative will bring about an Advisory Council. The Advisory Council will have autonomy to provide direction and make decisions that are critical in the implementation. The Uplinks initiative will support alternative learning and mastery of learning through standards vs. time. The LEA identified consultants who will work to ensure equal access to ESL and students with disabilities.</p> <p>This component is lacking a thorough description of key stakeholders and hierarchy of the individual councils. Although evidence of a high quality plan are provided; each of the four assurances are lacking in their support.</p>		
<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The LEA only refers to access of the information via technology and references libraries and commercial providers. The application lacks a reference to families who are unable to utilize technological resources. The application noted that technical support will be made available through vendors, consultants, and training. A partnership established through this grant will provide an opportunity for the district to make the export of student information possible. Evidence of how Uplinks will serve as the data management source for all of the other databases. The LEA presented a vague plan for providing specific technological support to all stakeholders.</p>		

#### E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>A comprehensive organizational chart was presented. Elements of a high quality plan are embedded within the Organizational Chart for Continuous Improvement and Evaluation Measures. Ways in which the plan will be evaluated was extensive and complete. A well thought out overview to for revision was presented; however, the LEA is lacking specific details/ information pertaining to the revision process. The description was general in nature.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>A comprehensive plan was described to support communications with internal and external stakeholders. Even though language barriers are not common in the area, the LEA has established plans to accommodate that need.</p>		
<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>

**(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

Behavior referrals were integrated as a measure at multiple levels in addition to academic indicators measuring student achievement. A thorough rationale was provided for each measure. Stakeholders were identified in the review process to gage implementation. Goals reflect ambitious and achievable targets.

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

**5**

**3**

**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The District identified Uplinks as the tool to collect data and plans to use that tool to identify the effectiveness of the grant. Open-ended questions were posed to guide in the effectiveness reflection process. The description provided a general overview for the evaluative process; however specific timelines for deliverables was not identified.

**F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b> The LEA provided an extensive and well thought out rationale for each of the identified expenses. A chart outlined the expenses projected over a 4 year period. Funds from other sources are also provided within the chart. The outlined expenses reflected reasonable and sufficient support to fund the proposal.		
<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b> The LEA outlined a very limited explanation of the sustainability of the project. No plan to secure funds to continue on with components such as Uplinks was identified. Outcomes were not identified to inform post-grant budget other than some districts may be able to sustain the reforms without the additional expense. The District identified how the professional development was self-sustaining; however, planning to continue to support these areas of professional development for new staff was not addressed. A general statement reflecting on the premise that some schools may wish to discontinue Uplinks presents a concern.		

**Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</b> Desired results were identified as both academic and family/community support in nature. Data collection and desired results were presented. The rationale is comprehensive and identifies critical community factors affecting student achievement. Uplinks again (the central focus of personalized learning initiative within this grant) will play a critical role in the data analysis, inventory of need of students, assets, etc... The vision is complete; however, specific planning details are lacking in the areas of routine assessments, the plan for specifically how to involve parents, and removing barriers, etc...		

**Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments**

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Met</b>
<b>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</b> This particular proposal includes elements aligned to the Absolute Priority 1. Personalized learning is the focal point of this proposal. All of the learning is aligned to college and career readiness goals, the Common Core State Standards, and		

equal access to all students within this consortium.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>156</b>
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## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

#### Application #0050KY-2 for Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services

#### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>

#### (A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services (NKCES) provided an unusual but powerful introduction to its RTTD funding application to illustrate some of the difficulties encountered by the students and their families living in Northern Kentucky.

The geographical and historical background provided by the LEAs is helpful in contextualizing what led the districts to unite and put together this application for funding.

The NKCES has set forth an ambitious vision built around four core educational areas:

- Assurance 1: Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy.
  - o The NKCES indicated that the state of Kentucky adopted a system called Unbridled learning in 2009 aimed at preparing students for college and career. In recent years the state has also adopted the Common Core standards in English/Language Arts and in Mathematics were adopted in 2010 -2011, the state will be releasing new Science standards soon and it is anticipated that social studies standards will be adopted this year. The LEAs indicate that they have provided leadership and support during the ongoing implementation process of the new standards. NKCES has trained teachers, administrators and instructional coaches on the new standards and its implications for student learning. The LEAs indicated that it intends to faithfully implement the new standards and that UPLINKS (Universal Personalized Learning Interventions for Northern Kentucky students) personnel will continue to work with all stakeholders to inform, train and prepare LEA for new standards to help students achieve college and career readiness. The LEAs have satisfactorily met this goal.
- Assurance 2: Building data systems that measure student growth and success and inform teachers and principals with data about how they can improve instruction.

The NKCES indicates that all public school educators in the state of Kentucky have access to the Continuous Instructional Improvement Technology System (CIITS) that includes standards, lesson plans, test banks, student performance data and professional development tools (PD 360). The district indicated that it would keep providing regional trainings for CIITS. The LEAs indicated that it would add information and data to allow teachers to serve

the needs of transient students. The applicant did not provide specific information about the ways in which the new data systems will measure student growth and success and inform teachers and principals with data about how they can improve instruction.

- Assurance 3: Recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most.

NKCES indicated that it is working with state officials train districts to implement the new Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (PGES), to increase student learning by ensuring that each student is taught by an effective teacher. The LEAs explained that they provided professional development to 2,000 teachers; they also work with UD department of education personnel in the area of school counseling. However, NKCES does not provide specific information about how it intends to recruit, develop, reward and retain effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most. The LEAs indicate that UPLINKS will help them meet the goal of supporting teacher effectiveness but did not provide clear evidence that they would be able to recruit, develop, reward and retain effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most.

- Assurance 4: Turning around lowest-achieving schools.

NKCES will add ten academics-focused Personalized Learning Advisers who will provide district personnel with coaching and academic support, the districts also indicated that they would continue to use instructional coaches and Education recovery specialists from the Kentucky department of Education. CCRA trained school counselors will also be providing support in areas/schools in most need of support. Based on the evidence provided in this section it appears that the NKCES will be primarily relying on professional development opportunities for its staff combined with the support of specialists from the Kentucky department of Education. The districts provided and incomplete narrative as to how they would turn around lowest-achieving schools.

The NKCES provided extensive information about how it intends to provide personalized learning for all. The applicants will provide counseling services to 14 LEAs to assist transient students in the Northern Kentucky area, they also planned more CCRA training for staff, and other counseling programs targeting students in grades K-1, 2-3, 4-12. However the LEAs appear to rely heavily on other entities or existing programs to help them in providing personalized learning for students, the description provided by the applicants is confusing. One initiative called the UPLINKS education center appears promising in providing personalized learning through a high school without wall staffed with master teachers. The UPLINKS data center is another promising initiative since it would allow LEAs in Northern Kentucky follow students who may be moving form district to the next therefore providing continuity in students' educational experiences.

The NCEKS provided an ambitious vision for what classroom experience will be like for students and teachers participating in personalized learning environments, however this vision does not appear realistic based on the low number of Personalized learning advisers (PLA) and College and career ready advisers ( One CCRA for each each 4,000 students). Here again, the NCEKS describes the type of experiences students will enjoy without providing a step by step plan to achieve its ambitious vision. However, the Individual Learning plan (to be introduced in 6<sup>th</sup> grade to assist students with exploring careers) appears promising.

Overall the NCEKS offered an ambitious but incomplete vision for the future. Based on the evidence it provided in this section the applicants have not made a convincing case to support their vision.

<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
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<p><b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The NKCES indicated how the application process took place. UPLINKs will provide services to 2,557 teachers and 41,128 K-12 students in Northern Kentucky. The NKCES has demonstrated effectively why it selected the schools to participate in RTT-D funded activities. The district has listed the schools that would be participating as well as the number of students being served, as well as information about all sub-groups that would be served if RTT-D funding were received. NKCES has presented a well-documented plan for its approach for implementation.</p>
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<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The NKCES has developed several goals projects aimed at implementing meaningful reform district-wide. The four goals are centered on specific areas:</p> <p>Goal 1 focuses on initiatives related to make sure all students will receive support to customize their learning experiences and maximize learning. The applicants indicated that this goal would be achieved by increasing the effectiveness of teachers and leaders, increasing academic outcomes for all students and increasing non-cognitive outcomes for all students. The applicants explained that these goals would be achieved through providing support for teachers, students (through counseling) and the use of the ILP (for individual interventions to promote college and career readiness. The applicants provided a timetable for hiring and training staff to implement this plan, however the plan is not very specific.</p> <p>Goal 2 focuses on initiatives aimed at establishing an innovative UPLINKS education center that would increase academic outcomes for students at highest risk of dropout and other students who need support through non-traditional school, increase non-cognitive outcomes for students at highest risk of dropout and other students who need support through non-traditional schools. It appears that the ambitious goals are not backed up with specific evidence or information on how the districts will implement their plan.</p> <p>Goal 3 focuses on initiatives aimed at establishing the UPLINKS data center that would increase academic outcomes for all students and increase non-cognitive outcomes for all students. Here again the applicants that they will establish data resources in collaboration with other entities but a specific plan of action is not clearly provided.</p> <p>Overall, the LEAs have set a very ambitious plan for LEA-wide reform and change, but the narrative provided by the applicants does not provided meaningful evidence or information indicating specifically how the plan will be implemented and how it will improve student learning outcomes for all students served.</p>		

<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
<p><b>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicants appears to have set too ambitious academic growth goals on Kentucky's summative assessments in Elementary, Middle school and high school combined reading and mathematics proficiency. The LEA's have also set very ambitious goals to decrease the achievement gaps and college enrollment. A narrative detailing why the use of combined results in Elementary, middle school and high school was used instead of a specific test would have been helpful. Overall, it appears that the LEAs have set very ambitious goals for student outcomes, a narrative detailing goals for specific subgroups would have strengthened this section.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The district presented some evidence of reform in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement. The district has seen limited gains in student achievement as measured by ACT, EXPLORE and PLAN data. The districts also report that NKCES has supported districts to improve academic growth at rates higher than that of their peers. The districts also provided a list of achievements in selected school districts and campuses. However, the applicant has not provided sufficient evidence when explaining how it makes student performance available to all stakeholders other than through Infinite Campus.</p>		

Overall, the evidence provided by the districts in this section is limited and does not demonstrate a clear track record of success.

<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
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**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The NKCES indicated that the district publishes financial reports, salary schedules and related information on their website. The state of Kentucky also publishes a school report card about each school providing the public with additional information including per-pupil expenditures at the school level. The NKCES also explained that 6 of the 14 districts participate in the in the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) survey conducted by the US Department of Education providing information on enrollment, courses taken, demographics, policies, school financial practices. The applicants also explained that through UPLINKS the other eight district will also participate in the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) survey. Overall, the NCEKS has demonstrated evidence of high level of transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments, including by making public, by school, actual school-level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration.

<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
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**(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The NKCES indicated that it is very well positioned to fully implement its project thanks to recent bills passed in the Kentucky legislature (HB 37) allowing for more flexibility in the ways in which school districts implement reform. The NKCES also believes that the UPLINKS education centers and UPLINKS data centers will be great tools in helping to provide all students with personalized learning opportunities. The Career Pathway statute (SB 38) also provides funding for career and technical education and will allow NCKCES to support students in college and career readiness. Overall, the district has demonstrated evidence of successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under state, legal statutory and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments described in its proposal.

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>
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**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicants indicated that the proposal was discussed with all 17 superintendents and collective bargaining groups (when applicable). The application was also discussed with community college officials and universities who will be involved in grant activities upon receiving RTTD funding. The district indicated that teachers were surveyed about the application and supported it overwhelmingly. It appears that parents were not directly surveyed however the district indicated that the application was discussed in the parent forum. The district also received the support of several public and community partners as evidenced by letters of support included in the application for funds (Northern Kentucky University College of Education, Northern Kentucky University Human Services Department of Counseling, Social Work, & Leadership, and the Northern Kentucky University Center for Educator Excellence; the Kentucky Agency for Substance Abuse Policy, Northern Kentucky Board (NKY ASAP) Prevention Alliance. Overall, the district presented strong evidence to demonstrate that stakeholders were involved in the development of the proposal.

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

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12</b>

**(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The NKCES has an ambitious plan to prepare students for College and career. In its introduction to this section the applicants indicated that they would offer students personalized learning through digital curricula, blended curricula and a flipped classroom approach, another approach will be to use the Student Skills Series (SSS) in grades K-12. It appears that the applicants will be relying heavily on the SSS series when working with students. The applicants do not provide much evidence as how it will help students understand that what they are learning is key in accomplishing their goals. The NKCES is also relying very heavily on the LLP instrument without providing specific information on program implementation or what a student enrolled in NKCES may experience. However, the applicants provided sufficient information demonstrating that students will be able to be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest thanks to the UPLINKS center. The district did not provide relevant information demonstrating that students will have access and

exposure to diverse cultures and contexts. The description of the SSS program appears to be promising when it comes to helping students in goal setting, performance and critical thinking. It appears that the NCEKS will be relying on online curricula to support a personalized sequence of instructional content, this is problematic since the district does not provide enough information about the ways in which it will serve the needs of all students. The NKCES provided a lot of information in this section, however the evidence provided does not indicate that the applicants have a high quality plan in place.

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

**20**

**14**

**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The NKCES presented a coherent plan for preparing students for college and careers through teaching and leading. The applicants have provided ample evidence that they will be able to provide all educators to engage in training to support the implementation of the project through partnerships with local universities. Furthermore, the districts indicated that the teachers have prepared to adapt to a new teaching and learning environment since the passing of SB 1 and the adoption of by the state of Kentucky of the Common Core Standards. This assumption is realistic and makes sense. The applicants explained that the UPLINKS center would provide extensive training for teachers, especially with new curricula (SSS series). The districts expect that this training will enable teachers and principals to acquire or develop the learning strategies that will allow students to engage in meaningful activities tailored to their academic needs or interests. In the UPLINKS project students will be assessed regularly with online tools tied to career and college readiness standards. Teachers and principals will be assessed using the Professional Growth and Effective Systems, their effectiveness will be enhanced thanks to the districts' creation of the UPLINKS data center allowing them to have access to a wide array of instructional and evaluation tools. The school districts also explained how they would provide extensive training for all teachers and school leaders. However, it appears that this training will be conducted at the local level, which may limit growth in teacher and school leader effectiveness. Overall, the NKCES has provided a coherent plan for preparing students for college and careers through teaching and leading.

**D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>

**(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The NKCES indicated that major decisions regarding grant funded activities will be made by the advisory council (composed of university faculty and administrative staff from the NKCES), the NKECS executive director along with a faculty member at the University of Northern Kentucky. Based on the evidence provided by the NKCES the system in place is appropriate for overseeing RTTD grant funding activities.

NKCES it is very well positioned to fully implement its project thanks to the School Based Decision Making Councils (SBDM) who will enable schools to make the best decisions at the local level with the advisory council. One crucial area that has not yet been settled is the question of competency-based advancement toward college and career readiness, the NKCES indicated that it will be working with the Kentucky department of Education to establish model policies for this approach. In this model (once approved), students will have flexibility in the ways in which they demonstrate mastery of academic content. The districts provided limited specific information about resources and instructional practices aimed at serving the needs of all students in grant-funded activities. Overall, the applicants have presented an incomplete case for this section.

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

**10**

**5**

**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicants indicated that LEAs and schools of UPLINKS are moderately well equipped with technology access, based on the evidence provided it appears that the LEAs and schools are not equipped well to meet the needs of students, teachers and families. However, the applicants indicated that upon funding the UPLINKS Education and data center would be able to provide all stakeholders with the tools needed to ensure personalized learning for students. At this point in time, NKCES is still working on the interoperability of existing and newly adopted data systems. Overall, the applicants did not

provide strong evidence that it has the infrastructure in place to support personalized learning.

### E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The NKCES has provided a strategy for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant. The district states that it has a rigorous continuous improvement process plan based on timely feedback on project progress toward stated goals and regular monitoring, gathering and analysis of data and communication of program goals and achievements. However, the applicant did not specifically address how it intends to publicly share information on the quality of its investments funded by Race to the Top – District, such as investments in professional development, technology, and staff comprehensive. Overall, the NKCES has presented an appropriate plan.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The NKCES has a solid plan in place to ensure ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. The applicant indicated that it will share all grant related activities, the chart the presented is very detailed and specific the type of activity to be reported, the timeline as well as deliverables and the individual responsible for delivering this information. The district indicated that it also has a plan and staff in place to communicate with families whose native language is not English. The applicants indicated that the advisory council would also hold open communication forums with all stakeholders. Overall the applicants provided a comprehensive plan for ongoing communication with internal and external stakeholders.</p>		
<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The NKCES has selected ambitious yet achievable performance measures. The rationale provided for selecting each measure makes sense (especially for measures such as EXPLORE in the middle grades and ACT, ASVAB and KOSSA at the high school level), the district selected measures starting in the early grades to high school. The applicant also indicated precisely how it these measures provide rigorous, timely, and formative information tailored to their proposal proposal. The applicant also offered a compelling case about how it will review its plan overtime. Overall, the applicant presented a strong plan.</p>		
<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
<p><b>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The district indicates that it will use multiple measures in evaluating the effectiveness of RTT-D funded activities. All UPLINKS evaluation will begin with the “SO WHAT?” questions followed by a rigorous analysis of professional development activities and technology. The NKCES indicated that an evaluation team meet with each project director and will review data on process, effectiveness and outcomes. The applicants indicated that this approach will allow for a qualitative and quantitative analysis of data of all projects, activities, professional development and technology use. However, the applicant did not provide specific information about a timeline for evaluating the effectiveness of RTT-D funded activities. Overall, the applicant provided an acceptable plan.</p>		

### F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>

**(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The NKCES budget clearly identifies all all funds that will support the project. The applicants indicate all funds that will support the project (Race to the Top, contracted entity). Based on the evidence provided it appears that the budget is sufficient to support and implement the applicants' proposal. The budget is broken down into categories (personnel, travel, contractual, fringe benefits, travel, supplies, supplies, project investments and support) and includes a breakdown of expenses for personalized learning, UPLINKS education and Data centers and UPLINKS management and evaluation. The applicants have provided sufficient information to earn a high rating for their budget plan.

**(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)**

**10**

**3**

**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The NKCES provided a limited plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant indicating that most strategies and activities are self-sustaining. However the applicants did not indicate how they would sustain partnerships with local universities and pay for curricula, technology and support beyond the four years. The district did not indicate if they have sought support from local or state government. The applicants' plan for sustainability appears to be centered on Senate Bill 38 passed in 2012 in the Kentucky legislature that supports the expansion of focus on college and career readiness. Overall, NKCES has presented a very limited plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant.

**Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

NKCES provided a bold proposal in the competitive preference priority section of this application. It painted a grim picture of alcohol and drug abuse in Northern Kentucky and indicated that UPLINKS has partnered with 9 Northern Kentucky drug preventions coalitions. This partnership does not appear anywhere else in the application, the applicants indicated that they intentionally "saved of the strongest partnership for last". This approach is inconsistent with the rest of the application and questionable, while NKCES is to be commended for wanting to solve a societal issue the plan and the desired results appear too ambitious to be reached in a four year period.

**Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments**

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Met</b>

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The NKCES has set an ambitious vision of Universal Personalized Learning Intervention for Northern Kentucky (UPLINKS) students. This bold vision will be using RTTD funds to achieve success in the four core educational assurance areas. Overall, NKCES's plan offers students an opportunity to learn using personalized strategies aligned with Common core standards and tied to College and career readiness.

The creation of the UPLINKS center and data center will allow for students to be career and college ready. Overall, the applicants' plan offers students a unique opportunity to learn using personalized strategies (with online curricula, and extensive support provided by specialists) aligned with CCSS standards and tied to College and career readiness. Based on the information provided in this application the NCK has met absolute priority 1.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>144</b>
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# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

### Application #0050KY-3 for Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services

#### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

**(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services (NKCES) Consortium consists of 14 out of 17 districts located in the northern Kentucky regional service center area, the lead LEA, serving 41, 128 students in 67 elementary, middle and high schools. NKCES presents an exquisitely coherent plan than makes a great deal of sense, reflects considerable deliberative thought and analysis and a noble, ambitious agenda over the grant period. The over-arching programmatic entity is Universal Personalized Learning Interventions for Northern Kentucky Students (UPLINKS). The plan makes a compelling case for addressing one of the region's greatest challenges, transience, through the vivid view of a student's circumstance, Jason, aligned with a clear rationale for the importance of personalized learning as a mitigating factor to redirect student academic success for Jason and similarly situated students. The plan is fulsome in its statistical picture of the area's challenges and offers a clear, sober snapshot of the realities of how diverse the district's are in their approach to the problems and the districts' willingness to embrace change. Some are described as eager, early adopters and others as requiring unavoidable legal mandates to force reform. Therefore, it is a great strength of this application that 14 districts, ranging in size from 20,000 to 207 students, each enthusiastically endorsed the reform plan. It is also a strength that 3 of the consortia districts rank last in the state accountability system yet another 3 in the consortia rank within the top 6 of the state offering a tremendous opportunity for shared best practices and support. Indeed, this is remarkable as the narrative states.

(a) The narrative makes an extremely strong case in support of personalized learning systems as "exactly the right topic to address these LEA's specific needs of students in each school" and provides substantial evidence that demonstrates a robust plan for building on its work in the four educational assurance areas. The plan not only describes the current status within the district's in support of the core educational areas but amplifies how the reform initiative, UPLINKS and its three detailed project components, will enhance this work over the grand period. Specific highlights include the State's early adoption of Common Core Standards and Assessments as well as the consortia's integration of this effort at the district level, the State's Continuous Instructional Improvement Technology System as the backbone of a strong data system, deep emphasis on specific supports for the development of effective and highly effective teachers and principals, and a thorough description of a comprehensive approach to turning around the lowest-achieving schools.

(b) The plan is exceptional in its integration of solid research to inform the creation of the three projects - UPLINKS Personalized Learning for All, UPLINKS Education Center, and UPLINKS Data Center - to ensure evidence-based personalized learning plans linked to accelerated student achievement, deepening student learning in an array of aspects, and increasing equity through personalized student support as required by the criterion.

(c) The plan is rich with innovative ideas like the new high school education center without walls to meet the needs of the growing older student population in response to the State's extension of compulsory attendance from 16 to 18 and in acknowledging a critical gap in data analysis in that no resource exists at present for ongoing collaborative, comprehensive regional analysis of data to inform the creation of effective personalized learning environments. The application offers a very high-quality plan for developing imaginative classroom experiences for students and teachers participating in personalized learning environments.

<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
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**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services consortia presents a strongly executed approach to ensure high-quality support from each participating LEA as well as within the 67 participating elementary, middle and high schools.

The application describes how the consortia was organized around previous district collaboration in the region and defines the detailed effort expended to engage each LEA resulting in 14 of 17 districts joining the consortia.

(a) The application provides a detailed description of the selection process, including the mechanisms used to work with all 17 districts in the region, giving ample opportunity to all district to participate, and how the consortia resulted in 14 participating districts with all schools within those districts participating in the reform proposal.

(b) The application includes a detailed list of all participating schools as required by the criterion.

(c) A complete list of participating students is provided, fully meeting the requirements of the criterion, indicating that 100% of all students within the schools of the consortia's 14 districts are participating. The table provided also indicates the number of participating students from low-income families, high-need students and participating educators as required by the criterion.

<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
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**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The application provides a detailed, high-quality plan, aligned with specific goals to assist all students in customizing their learning experiences, enhance the number of effective and highly effective teachers, better utilize data, and that describes the present situation, anticipated inputs, expected outputs and targeted outcomes once the reform proposal is scaled beyond the Northern Kentucky region to have statewide and potentially national impact. The plan calls for the innovative creation of a regional UPLINKS Education Center and Data Center as well. The plan includes specific outcome goals, strategies to attain each goal, timelines and indicates responsible parties and deliverables. The plan is thorough, ambitious, targeted at meaningful academic achievement and is coherent.

<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
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**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

(a) The application indicates ambitious yet achievable goals for summative assessments that exceed the State ESEA targets overall and by subgroup. The outcome targets are aggressive yet achievable and reflect a commitment to meaningful gains for all students by the end of the grant period.

(b) The data provided for academic goals by subgroup is quite ambitious, would substantially reduce the achievement gap and mark an exceptional turnaround for thousands of students if successful. The rationale for establishing targets is described and demonstrates evidence of reasonable thought in setting performance goals.

(c) The baseline data for graduation rates requires some explanation that is not included. In contrast to most national trends, the graduation rate for Hispanic students is 100% and 87% for Black students. The graduation rate for White students is 80% and 70% for Asians. While post-grant targets are ambitious yet achievable, based on the baseline provided, a narrative explanation of the starting point would be useful particularly as this appears to be in variance to the data provided for academic performance measures by sub-group resulting in a reduction in points.

(d) The goals described for college enrollment are reasonable, ambitious yet achievable and reflect meaningful outcomes, if successful, at the conclusion of the grant period.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>

**(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

(a) The application includes several charts that demonstrate student achievement gains on state assessments, ACT scores and reading/math growth in grades 4 through 8 and 11 over the past four years. The criterion requires evidence of learning outcomes that address closing the achievement gap, raising high school graduation rates and improving college enrollment rates. However, the narrative fails to provide evidence in those areas resulting in a reduction in points.

(b) The criterion requires evidence of a clear record of success for achieving ambitious and significant reforms in persistently lowest-achieving schools or low-performing schools. The narrative and accompanying charts are weak and not fully explained. Further, out of the 14 participating districts and 67 schools, only a very small number of these are even addressed. The plan fails to meet the requirements of the criterion.

(c) Again, the narrative is quite weak, lacks in detail, does not address with specificity the types of performance data available in Infinite Campus, the State's data management system, nor does the application speak to how data are used in ways to inform and improve participation, instruction and services as required by the criterion.

<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
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**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

(a) The application indicates that the required information is currently available through school and district websites as well as at the State Department of Education website. While the literal availability of information is stated to be accessible, the criterion seeks a high-level of transparency which is not clear in the application as the ease of access to reports open to public view is not described.

(b)(c)(d) The narrative indicates that each category of personnel salaries and non-personnel expenditures is made available to the public, by school, at present. Further, six of the 14 participating districts are also part of the Civil Rights Data Collection survey through the US Department of Education which provides an additional level for these districts. The plan calls for full participation in this survey by all 14 districts through the envisioned UPLINKS system.

<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
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**(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The narrative alludes to several statutes in the Kentucky legislature but does not clarify if these are proposed or are, in fact, current state law. One of the statutes references the increase in compulsory attendance which has been referenced in other parts of the application as current state law but it does not speak at all to the requirements of this criteria for evidence of successful conditions and sufficient autonomy to ensure successful implementation of the reform plan. Absent further specificity, it is not possible to determine if the application fully meets the criteria. Though the narrative refers to a variety of additional elements, none provide evidence as specifically required.

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

(a) The criterion require evidence of meaningful stakeholder engagement including a description of how students, families, teacher and principals in participating schools were engaged in developing the proposal. The application, however, does not offer a detailed description of the proportional participation of students, families, teachers and principals across the 67 participating schools. The application indicates that parents were involved in the discussions but fails to state how many parents, how their input was captured or how any of the input from students, families, teachers and principals was revised based on their engagement and feedback, as required by the criterion. The teacher survey included in the appendix, along with the statistical summary in the narrative, provides evidence that more than 70% of participating LEA's without collective bargaining representation had the opportunity to register their views only with regard to a yes or no support of the reform plan. A copy of the survey is not included. Nor is there any evidence that this constitutes fulsome teacher participation in the development of the proposal. It is also not at all clear from the information provided how the teachers within the two districts with collective bargaining representation were or were not given the same opportunity. Further, the narrative does not address how survey data were used to revise or modify the final reform plan.

(b) The letters of support are exceptionally weak. The fact that the bulk of the letters are form letters greatly diminishes the integrity of the application and indicates a lack of authentic interest or original thought from those submitting letters. The letters presented on pages 382-386 are illegible. The application does not meet this criterion.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>

**(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

(a) The application returns in this section to the initial aspirations that were brilliantly conveyed at the start of the narrative but were lost in the last section. Student learning augmented by personalized learning is the heart of the competition. The plan described is detailed, coherent and conveys a substantial degree of analyzed thought that fully meets the elements of this criterion. Each of the five romanettes are fully covered in the narrative with exceptional highlights in the imaginative

section focused on at-risk students and the tremendous flexibility offered to meet student needs as well as the varied alternatives to learning presented to support achieving the goals for improved math, reading, freshman graduation, college and career readiness and non-cognitive factors. Students will be aligned with a rich assortment of educator guidance that ensures they are able to contextualize their learning to the objectives necessary to attain their individual goals. The learning options are diverse and tightly aligned with college and career ready goals. The opportunities available in UPLINKS to deepen learning experiences in a wide array of academic interests is particularly powerful for the smaller districts in the consortia who would otherwise not have this access. The plan is strengthened with the explanation for how families without easy access to technology will also be given access through other means to ensure their inclusion. The plan provides high-quality evidence for each element through a comprehensive narrative. The only discernable weakness is with regard to providing student access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts and perspectives. Part of this is unavoidable given the demographic portrait of the consortia districts yet the plan attempts to address through programmatic aspects of the regional Education Center.

(b) Each element within the criterion is addressed in the plan and reflects adherence to the requirements. While some of the narrative seems to re-state the criteria without offering much in the way of detailed approaches, for instance, referring to "highest standards as to frequency of updating multiple data sources" without then identifying the source of the standards or specific frequency, or in the explanation for mechanisms to provide training and support to students to ensure they understand the tools and resources available.

(c) The narrative provides a list of programs that have been previously mentioned and some wrap-around support from the Public Information Officer but fails to thoroughly convey what specific mechanisms are currently in place, as required by the criterion.

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

**20**

**17**

**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The application provides a high-quality plan framed around Teaching and Leading that include a coherent set of goals, activities, timelines, deliverables and responsible parties in support of each of the three proposed projects in the reform plan. The activities described within the UPLINKS Education Center are particularly imaginative and include the ambitious goal that 100% of UPLINKS Education Center students will graduate by age 18 meeting college and career ready goals.

While the aspiration is laudable it exceeds the threshold of reasonableness. Less innovative are the activities listed for training teachers, counselors and administrators which do not seem to reveal any new strategies. Also, the plan repeatedly calls for 10 PLAs and 10 CCRAs at a ratio of 1:4000 students yet does not offer any rationale for why that ratio is deemed sufficient or how it was derived. The plan also states that six months will be allowed for building the data system with a target rollout of August 2014 but does not address contingency plans if this deadline is missed.

(a) The plan identifies a number of credible partnerships that will provide intensive training for staff, administrators and teachers that support the implementation of personalized learning plans for all participating students. The teacher and leader improvement plans reflect the essential elements required by this criterion with specific emphasis on improving teacher effectiveness though each element is comprehensively addressed in the narrative, reflective of a high quality plan. One of the plan's great strengths is in its approach to ensure frequent feedback across a variety of multiple measures that inform effective teaching. The consortia's strategy is based on solid research and the benefit derived from a large State Professional Growth and Effectiveness System.

(b) The narrative presents a reasonable strategy including a large number of tools to assist the identification of actionable information to improve optimal learning approaches as well as a plan for ensuring educators are aware of the tools available. The plan also includes a personalized career readiness system, based on a series of digital programs, to help students better navigate the realities of the workplace when applying college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements.

(c) The application presents a particularly high-quality plan for aligning training, policies, resources, data and tools with concrete information derived from a number of existing or proposed data systems that will help ensure continuous improvement in increasing student performance and closing achievement gaps. The narrative is comprehensive and meets each of the two elements within the criterion through evidence demonstrated via tables outlining training and technical assistance methods and their advantages, the establishment of an array of leadership committees comprised of relevant individuals tasked with developing a robust leader evaluation system, and their combined efforts to implement the prototype process provided in the appendix to measure overall teacher effectiveness.

(d) The plan essentially re-states much of what has already been presented as a comprehensive approach to ensure an

increase in the number of effective and highly effective teachers and principals. The plan is credible, ambitious yet achievable.

**D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>
<p><b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>(a) The consortia governance structure is thoroughly described as having essentially two parallel governing arms. First, the NKCES is presently organized consistent with State laws to ensure proper legal operating authority. Second, the reform plan envisions establishing an inclusive Advisory Council structure, mirroring much of the organizational system used by NKCES, and that engages each member LEA of the consortia. This plan indicates a strong, thoughtful support network necessary to provide support and services to all participating schools as required by the criterion.</p> <p>(b) Kentucky benefits from existing legal authority through School Based Decision Making Councils and a recently established "Districts of Innovation" process that offers substantial local autonomy over factors such as school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and non-educators and school-level budgets in compliance with the elements of this criterion.</p> <p>(c) Throughout the application, and not just in the narrative within this section, the reform proposal is built largely upon highly individualized learning plans that by definition require advancement upon demonstrated mastery. The consortia has repeatedly indicated its collective commitment to move away from the old "time in seat" structure to a more flexible learning arrangement guided by personalized learning with demonstrated evidence of this fact in compliance with this criterion.</p> <p>(d) Consistent with the comment above, the plan provides ample evidence that the individualized plans being designed are built with the notion that students be able to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times in in multiple comparable ways. The plan frequently speaks to the availability of a wide spectrum of curriculum content delivered in multiple modalities for all participating students.</p> <p>(e) The plan offers several sentences indicating that students with disabilities and English learners will be integrated into the reform proposal with various training opportunities. But the narrative is limited to providing an assurance in this regard without including any sufficient level of detail that might substantiate the consortia's commitment rather than appearing as an after-thought. This lack of detail results in a reduction in points.</p>		
<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>(a) The proposal offers a high-quality plan, supported by specific evidence and data, that all participating students, parents, educators and other stakeholders will have access to the wide array of tools and resources envisioned in UPLINKS or that are already provided via existing mechanisms described in the narrative.</p> <p>(b) While the narrative indicates responsibility lines for ensuring sufficient technical support as required by the criterion, the plan lacks sufficient detail with regard to how technical support resources will be structured across such a large consortia. The plan does not provide enough evidence of thought about how an efficient technical support infrastructure might be built in support of the reform agenda.</p> <p>(c) At present, most systems in consortia LEAs and schools do not have the capacity to allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format. The narrative provides assurances that UPLINKS regional data systems will be built to allow information to be exported by parents and students in compliance with this criterion.</p> <p>(d) Current data systems are not interoperable though the narrative points out that the State has a goal of increasing interoperability and that UPLINKS integrated systems will be built to promote interoperability. But the application does not offer an assurance that all consortia LEAs will use interoperable data systems, only that this will be promoted and encouraged.</p>		

**E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)**

	Available	Score
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<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The plan is comprehensive in meeting most of the elements within this criterion by outlining a wide array of solid measures for each detail of the reform proposal that, in the aggregate, will meet the threshold of rigorous continuous improvement as required. However, the plan lacks full coherence in describing how these many elements will be organized, structured and implemented in a way that assures timely and regular feedback. The narrative does not specifically articulate a vision for ongoing continuous improvement beyond the grant period. The chart provides valuable evidence of a robust suite of measures aligned with each goal but does not indicate the frequency with which is measure is obtained nor how that information will then be integrated with the other measures for each goal in order to be meaningfully conveyed.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The proposal offers a high-quality, coherent plan for ongoing communication and engagement with a wide array of internal and external stakeholders. The basis of the plan is built around two senior officers, the Public Information Officer and Communications Director. The plan includes a detailed chart outlining areas of responsibility, activities, deliverables and timelines for communicating in full compliance with the requirements of the criterion.</p>		
<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The application is thorough and detailed in responding to each element of the criterion across 12 performance measures, therefore meeting the minimum threshold of the number of required performance measures. Further, the application provides evidence of meeting each of the required and applicant proposed measures based on the consortia's population. The targets themselves are ambitious yet achievable representing a very high expectation across the board. The measures are coherent and provide a solid system of metrics to effectively monitor progress for all participating students across the grant period and beyond.</p>		
<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<p><b>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The application is emphatic on its laser-like focus on results related to three areas and three areas alone: teacher effectiveness, student learning and college and career ready outcomes. This is laudable and the narrative serves the purpose of providing a strong philosophical statement. But the plan lacks specificity and coherence in explaining exactly how this it to be achieved beyond a simple re-statement of the types of evaluations envisioned in the proposal. To meet this criterion, the plan requires evidence to support the approach taken to ensure rigor in evaluating the effectiveness of Race to the Top - District funded activities.</p>		

**F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)**

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
<p><b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The application provides a thoughtful, detailed rationale for each element of the budget but fails to fully describe the source of all funds to be utilized. Each budget table includes a line item for additional funds but does not identify in any of these tables where those funds will be derived. A few additional aspects are of concern. The plan describes developing a data management system at a cost of \$50,000 per year of the grant period. This is a very important element of the reform proposal yet the budget does not sufficiently describe how this amount was established nor does it provide credible evidence that the amount is accurate. Also, several parts of the application indicate the importance of making more technology available to students through acquiring an additional 300 computers. What is not addressed either in other sections or within the budget is how the number of 300 was determined as appropriate and sufficient across a participating student population in excess of 40,000 nor does the plan describe how the computers will be shared or apportioned among the 14 participating LEAs. The plan is also silent on any description of expectations or strategies to ensure the long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments in terms of budgetary support. Based on the rich number of goals</p>		

and activities presented in this plan, the overall budget is reasonable and sufficient a part from the two issues raised above.

**(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)**

**10**

**5**

**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The narrative reflects a thoughtful though not particularly high-quality plan for sustaining the project's goals beyond the grant term. It is clear that some thought has been given to how various State projects might assist in sustaining various aspects of the reform agenda, for instance, with the deployment of college- and career-ready coaches by 2018, as well as how a number of functions will be integrated into the regular district activities post-grant. However, most of this relies on expectation that these things will happen without demonstrating any thought for how long-term support might be obtained from others nor any discussion of a system being put in place that will allow NKCES to evaluate improvements in productivity and outcomes, as required by the criterion.

**Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

The narrative in support of the Competitive Preference Priority is among the strongest in the application. It reflects a deep understanding of the underlying issues confronting the students in Northern Kentucky as a function of long-held customs around the use of drugs and alcohol. It is testament to the community that such a well-focused effort has been created, specifically the Prevention Alliance, that is comprised of a very credible network of organizations. As UPLINKS and the Prevention Alliance are combined, particularly in the shared use of data that will, as the plan points out, strengthen the choices of both. The application presents a very high-quality plan outlining a coherent, sustainable partnership, eight thoughtfully considered population-level desired results focused on ambitious yet achievable outcomes, a reasonable design for integrating education and services, and a plan for augmenting staff capacity in each of the five areas required by the criterion. A reduction in points was made due to the lack of explaining how parents and students are to be involved in decision-making and a weak description of how the long list of surveys and assessments mentioned will be integrated coherently to assess the needs and assets of participating students identified by the partnership.

**Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments**

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Met</b>

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The application presented by the Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services consortia captures the spirit and intent of the Race to the Top - District competition. The narrative in support of this robust reform agenda is first and foremost singularly focused on improved student outcomes through personalized learning environments. The application goes beyond assertion and reflects a vivid sense of exactly what needs to be done. The plan is designed to build on the four core educational assurance issues, substantially and creatively improving college- and career-ready outcomes, accelerating student achievement and deepening student learning. NKCES created UPLINKS with an underlying foundation for increasing educator effectiveness as evidenced by the metrics integrated into the plan enhanced by strong, fulsome support systems. The plan repeatedly addresses strategies for decreasing achievement gaps with equally strong improvement expectations across each subgroup. The same exists for the consortia's approach to increase graduation rates at which students are prepared for college and careers. The only deficiency in an otherwise strong application is in providing coherent evidence for a prior record of success and conditions for reform. This section stands a part from the high quality exhibited in the balance of the proposal.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>150</b>
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