



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0036MN-2 for Windom Public School District - 0177

### A. Vision (40 total points)

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

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

This is a consortium grant involving 6 rural districts. The proposal refers to the districts as the "Buffalo Ridge Educational Alliance" (BREA). The name of their grant initiative is *Project IGNITE!* (Individual Growth Nurtured by Innovation through Education). The focus of the grant is three-fold: Project 1 Personalized Learning Opportunities for Students K-12; Project 2 Cultivate High-Quality Educators; and Project 3 College-and Career-Readiness through Alternative Pathways to Graduation.

Following are some of the strengths in this section:

The applicant articulates a reform vision which is "to create a 21st Century Learning Experience that embraces personalization, innovation, youth development and growth for our students." Throughout, the applicant refers to a 21st Century Learning Experience which is rich in technology and interest-driven extended learning and project-based learning opportunities. The intent is to move from the traditional time-based approach to learning to a competency-based approach. The consortium will build on the existing collaborations and partnerships to accomplish this vision.

In addition, they will take pilot projects that are in place and transform them into a "sustainable, competency based system." Transforming the pilot projects is just one part of the comprehensive and coherent reform vision.

The applicant will build on the core educational assurances areas by implementing the three projects identified in the first paragraph above. The applicant builds a credible approach in their proposal to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning and increasing equity. For example, the 1:1 technology and the strategies described later in the plan to ensure students have internet access will increase equity. This is a strength of the proposal which contributes to the goal of increasing equity.

Project 1 Personalized Learning Opportunities supports the vision by aligning curriculum, instruction and formative assessments; ensuring the use of 1-1 technology for students and educators; and implementing extended time supports. The alignment work builds on the core educational assurance area of standards and assessments. The applicant will use the college- and career-ready standards as the foundation for the alignment work.

Project 2 ensures that educators are effective and have the skills and knowledge to differentiate instruction, personalize instruction, use the technology and access data. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and professional development are important components to ensuring teachers have the necessary skills and knowledge. All member districts already have PLCs in place. The emphasis on providing educators with professional development related to the technology and personalized learning environments of the proposal will help the applicant reach the goals of accelerating student achievement and deepen student learning. This is a strength of the proposal.

Project 3 provides students alternative pathways to graduation. This builds on the shift to competency-based systems. Virtual learning and extended learning opportunities are part of the vision for changing the classroom experience. It's not clear how some of the extended learning opportunities, i.e. 4-H, are considered as part of an alternative pathway. Those opportunities may increase motivation but the applicant doesn't explain how the activity connects to classroom experiences and impacts learning.

There are a few other concerns regarding how the Race to the Top District-Level proposal supports the reform vision. The classroom experiences for both students and teachers participating in personalized learning environments are alluded to; however, they are not clearly described. It mentions there will be 1:1 technology but not how it will change the classroom. Little is provided that indicates teaching strategies within the classroom are changing.

In addition, how the proposed projects build on all four core educational assurance areas is not described with any detail. The reviewer assumes that the member districts do not have any identified lowest-achieving schools to turn around. It will

be a challenge ensuring that all member districts embrace and implement the proposed activities in order to reach the vision.

**(A)(2) Applicant’s approach to implementation (10 points)**

**10**

**7**

**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant's approach to implementation is to include all 6,829 students and all 20 schools in the six-district member consortium in the proposed grant activities. As a result, this has the potential to support high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation of the proposal since all educators and students will be impacted by the proposal activities.

The applicant completed Table A2 by providing the data for each individual district. The data, however, was not provided for each individual participating school. As a result of not presenting the data by individual schools, points were reduced.

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

**10**

**7**

**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

Since all students and schools within the 6-district consortium are participating, the proposal is already scaled up for district-wide change.

The applicant provided a logic model table delineating short-term, intermediate and long-term outcomes for each of the three projects. The intended outcomes are to drive the activities. If all the districts reach the intended outcomes, the applicant's ability to scale up to meaningful reform including improving student outcomes goals should be achievable. For example, with the 1-1 technology initiative, an intermediate outcome is to have "evidence of higher authentic engagement by students." When the applicant sees this happening, there is more potential for the long-term outcome to occur which is "Student achievement is increased."

It is noted, however, that several of the listed outcomes are actually activities, i.e. 'create an electronic bank of formative assessments within the BREA school.' and "evaluate current PSEO, AP and College in the School courses within each BREA school." There was not a high-quality plan provided in section (A)(3) that included timelines, activities and person responsible.

A strength of this proposal is to not only implement the projects in all the member districts but to work with the SW/WC Services Cooperative to scale-up efforts beyond their districts.

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

**10**

**7**

**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

According to *Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions* E-8, the data (baseline and goals) in Table (A)(4)(a) should be provided separately for each district in the consortium. Instead, Performance on Summative Assessments and (b) Decreasing Achievement Gaps have aggregated the data by combining the six districts together. Not having the data presented in the manner requested contributed to a loss of points.

Since these are small rural districts, there are multiple subgroups when the data for all six districts are combined. These subgroups may not exist when the data is reported specifically for each district. According to a statement made in (B)(1) "It should be noted that with the exception of two districts (Marshall and Windom), the BREA districts do not have sufficient number of students in non-white racial/ethnic groups to report results." No points were reduced as a result of not reporting disaggregated data.

The goals relating to performance on summative assessments and decreasing achievement gaps are rigorous for the consortium based on the data in Tables (A)(4)(a) and (b). The goals are particularly rigorous for English Language

Learners and Hispanics as their baseline data is lower than all other groups. The goals are based on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) results. It is not clear, however, in the third paragraph on Section (A)(4), if the districts will continue with the MCA or switch to the NWEA assessment. If the assessments change, baseline data and goals may need to be revised.

Tables (A)(4)(c) Graduation rates and (A)(4)(d) College Enrollment display data specifically for each district. This data is not disaggregated; the numbers in the subgroup may be too small to report. No points were reduced as a result of not reporting disaggregated data.

The graduation rate and college enrollment goals reflect high expectations for each district. These goals may be obtainable since one foci of the Project IGNITE is College-and Career--Readiness through Alternative Pathways to Graduation. The college enrollment baseline data and goals are missing for Lakeview and Marshall in Table (a)(4)(d). The applicant indicated those districts will collect that information with the class of 2013.

## 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>9</b>

### (B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is limited in demonstrating a clear track record of success in the past four years. There are some instances in which data is provided to support a claim of success. There are, however, some programs mentioned as being successful but no supporting data is provided to substantiate the claim. Two programs mentioned that lack any supporting data are Project Discovery and Student Academic Behaviors.

In Section (B)(1), the applicant shares several initiatives that they believe have had a positive impact and show a record of success. Some of these initiatives, however, have little connection with the rest of the grant application. One example is Response to Intervention (RtI). In the paragraph on RtI, it mentions the AIMSweb and Star assessments. Yet no data is provided on these assessments to show success. The data provided in Section (B)(1) is from the state assessments.

The applicant does provide data from state assessments to support evidence of success in the areas of math and reading proficiency in the past four years with students with disabilities and students receiving free or reduced price lunches. Some of the districts in the consortium are showing significant positive changes and others have some declines. Overall, there is improvement. It is appreciated that the applicant mentioned a new state mathematics assessment was launched in 2011 so data prior and after the change should not be compared.

Graduation rates for 2012 are high rates. Three of the districts meet the State's graduation rate goal of 90%. Graduation data is provided for only one year for five of the districts in the consortium. The application states that Minneota School District does not have a sufficiently large class size to allow public reporting. Yet, baseline data (100%) was provided in (A)(4)(c).

Overall, the ACT results over the four years appear fairly constant with a range of 19-22.9. The Graduation-Required Assessment for Diploma (GRAD) results are for three years. These assessment results demonstrate the success the districts are having in advancing student learning and achievement.

(B)(1)(1)(b) was not addressed. It is not clear if any of the districts have schools that have been identified as persistently lowest-achieving schools or low-performing schools.

(B)(1)(1)(c) provides ways in which student performance data is currently available to educators and parents. Educators involved with the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) receive and analyze data regularly. This is a strength of the districts in that educators already have access to the data and a means for analyzing it.

On the other hand, districts also have student information systems with extensive data; however, it is not clear who has access to the data in that system. Parents and the community receive summary data in an annual report and in report cards. It is not clear what access parents currently have to their own children's data and how that data might be used.

Nothing is mentioned in this section regarding students currently being able to access their own data. Later in the grant, with the 1-1 technology focus, students will have access to their data. In addition, later sections also elaborate on parents having increased access to their student's data. This is an area that will improve with the implementation of the grant activities.

<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
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**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant provided information regarding public meetings and posting of information relating to district revenues and expenditures. It did not, however, include any information on school-level expenditures. As a result, this section received "1" point.

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

It appears that the applicant has successful conditions and sufficient autonomy for implementing parts of Project Ignite! State statute and prior experiences contribute to the applicant's ability to implement the personalized learning environments as described in the application.

It is particularly strong with Project 2 Cultivating High-Quality Educators. The districts have agreed to an additional 10 days of professional development. This has the support of the teacher unions. In addition, the president of the local teacher's union in each of the member districts signed the Memorandum of Understanding which supported the formation of the consortium and the Race to the Top District-Level application.

Five of the six districts have inter-district collaboration experiences through the Flexible Learning Year (FLY) consortium. They've meshed calendars and developed Professional Learning Communities.

In addition, Minnesota statute gives the districts the authority to offer personalized learning plans. Later in the grant, it is mentioned that the Commissioner of Education is supportive of moving away from Carnegie units. This support helps with the district's shift from seat-time to competency-based education.

Technology is key to creating and implementing personalized learning environments. The districts are increasing their technology capacity to support the 1-1 technology project. The districts have had telecommunication grants, infrastructure upgrades and pilots technology projects. These are contribute to having successful conditions.

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>
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**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

Meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the development of the grant application included input from a variety of entities such as principals, teacher leaders and community organizations. The public had opportunities to comment on the grant application during local board meetings or public meetings. If parents and students did not attend these meetings, they had no opportunity to comment on the proposal. This may have limited feedback from relevant stakeholders.

Since the comments from the various meetings were later discussed by the superintendents of the consortium to determine which, if any, changes needed to be made, this shows that stakeholder input was taken seriously. This is good.

Stakeholder support is strong in this grant application. There are numerous letters of support from a variety of entities including teacher unions, mayors, Minnesota Department of Education and many individuals and organizations.

it says that each mayor signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU). Generally, MOUs indicate what each entity will do. The pages signed by the mayors that are in the appendix appear to be letters of support rather than MOUs. It is not clear if the mayors are committing to perform or participate in any activities in the plan. Calling these items "MOUs" did not affect the rating given for Section (B)(4).

**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:**

In this section of the proposal, the applicant emphasizes building on pilot projects and other current efforts, embedding 21st Century skills in curriculum and personalizing learning opportunities. The applicant provided tables with goals, activities, which grant year, and persons responsible for two of the projects: Personalized Learning Opportunities and Alternative Pathways to Graduation.

The applicant states that the goal of this project is to ensure students experience a comprehensive, competency-based 21st Century Learning Experience rich in technology and interest-driven extended learning and project-based learning opportunities. There is an emphasis on embedding 21st Century standards/skills into the core curriculum. It appears that offering 1-1 technology is the approach to implementing the personalized learning plans. The technology is the vehicle. The applicant will use a digital portfolio as the platform for students' personalized learning plans. They believe this will optimize ongoing and regular feedback by teachers and parents. In the reviewer's professional judgment, this is a strength of the proposal.

The applicant did not address all the criteria in Section (c)(1). It's not clear if there is a variety of high-quality instructional approaches and environments and what accommodations and high-quality strategies are available for high-need students. In addition, having access to diverse cultures, contexts and perspectives to motivate deepen individual student learning is not clearly identified in the proposal.

There appears to be much work that needs to be done before a personalized learning environment is in place. This includes aligning curriculum, conducting a needs assessment regarding access to technology, assessing types of online courses, exploring partnerships, and denitrifying essential power standards. The first year of the grant will focus on purchasing the technology, aligning curriculum with instruction and assessments, establishing processes and developing extended learning opportunities. Students will develop their individual learning plans in the second year of the grant.

In general, the applicant provided sufficient information in the proposal to support an approach to learning that engages and empowers all learners. The proposal does not identify specific instructional strategies; however, it provides the tools and is fostering a culture of students working at their own pace on their specific goals.

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>
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**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

This proposal is strong in growing teachers and leaders. There is a significant emphasis on providing a culture of collaboration and capacity building. One of the projects in the grant is "Cultivating High-Quality Educators." The districts are providing numerous days and resources for professional development. The districts have Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that will work both within and across districts. Teachers and leaders will learn from national experts about 21st Century skills, project-based learning and personalized instruction. Teachers and leaders through their collaborative PLCs and leadership teams will learn how to integrate the technology and help students with their individualized learning plans.

The PLCs will be mining data to help modify goals and objectives for individual students and to adjust instruction. This is definitely an important aspect in supporting personalized learning environment. The system is not in place for providing that data yet. The applicant thinks all districts will use Educate System but is not definite; this limits the ability of school leaders and teachers to access and use data and information to accelerate and modify student progress in a timely manner.

(C)(2)(a)(iv) is an area that appears to be in development. The teacher and leader evaluation systems cannot connect students to teachers and principals so that student achievement data can be used in educator evaluations. The inclusion of student data in educator evaluations is to occur in 2014-2015.

The proposal does not explain how all participating educators will have access to and know how to use resources that identify optimal learning approaches that respond to individual student academic needs and interests (C)(2)(b)(i).

(C)(2)(c) The applicant indicates there is a two-fold strategy for providing school leaders with data and information to accelerate student progress toward being college- and career-ready. This includes the Ramp Up to Readiness program

and the Educate System School Leadership Teams. This reviewer does not understand how the Ramp Up to Readiness program helps school leaders. This program is a guidance program for students. The information on Educate was confusing as to the purpose and function of the teams.

There is nothing specific in the proposal that addresses (C)(2)(d). It is stated that students will have access to effective teachers and principals. There is no information specifically on areas that may be hard to fill with effective and highly effective teachers such as mathematics, science and special education.

#### 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>7</b>

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

In general, the practices, policies and rules to facilitate personalized learning are not in place in each district in the consortium. The consortium knows what it wants to do but it is not clear who is responsible for moving forward on a particular practice or policy or when it will happen. For example, it is mentioned in this section that waivers are available in Minnesota for doing away with Carnegie units. Yet, there is no plan outlined for applying for these waivers.

(a) The applicant explained the governance structure of the consortium for the grant well. This is a strength of the grant. The six school districts superintendents and the executive director of the SW/WC Service Center comprise the Governing Board. In addition to this Board, there will be Building Councils in each district. The Service Center will be the fiscal host. The Building Councils are primarily to check on implementation and to ensure that teachers and students are getting what they need from the grant.

(b) There is no flexibility or autonomy over school calendars and schedules. The beginning and ending dates and vacation times were agreed upon as part of the FLY Consortium. The districts have agreed to this schedule. High school schedules have been standardized for the purpose of sharing teachers and utilizing interactive television (ITV). The grant application mentions that there may be changes in the schedule as a result of technology. It's not clear, however, if the principal or leadership teams have any autonomy in those changes. The lack of autonomy negatively impacted the points in this section.

The application also indicates that school personnel decisions are made by each district and districts maintain authority of school-level budgets. It does not seem as though the individual schools have much flexibility.

(c) A key component of the grant is to allow students to learn at their own pace. Students will be grouped according to their competency level. Each districts' school board will need to pass policies allowing students to learn at own pace. The state has waivers available that allows districts to eliminate barriers to do away with the Carnegie unit. The application does not provide a timeline or who is responsible for seeking those waivers.

(d) The applicant provides examples from one district of how students can demonstrate mastery in multiple ways and multiple times. The application does not specify how other member districts will have practices, policies or rules that facilitate the demonstration of that mastery.

(e) The applicant did not really address the adaptability and accessibility of learning resources and instructional practices. The applicant indicates that grouping based on demonstrated skill level will be used. Groups will be reset monthly. There will be teams of teachers and paraprofessionals in classrooms to support student learning.

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
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**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

This section of the application is strong as it relates to who receives training on the technology. Not only do educators and students receive training on the technology, but also parents will have training available to them. All the schools in the consortium districts have Internet access and wireless networks. The districts will conduct a needs assessment of all families to determine Internet and technology access. The districts will establish WiFi hotspots based on those needs. In addition, they will add them to the school buses. Ensuring accessibility to the Internet and having the technology hardware is one key to this grant being successful.

It's commendable that parents will have training; however, no technical support strategy for parents is mentioned in the

application. Students and educators will have support both during school hours and after hours.

The applicant does not have a clear plan regarding data systems. Early it was mentioned that districts have student information systems, but in Sec. (D)(2) the application discusses purchasing a common system for both open data format and interoperable data systems. The applicant says that managing and using data in an open-format will happen by the end of the grant. Not having data available in this format until the end of the grant is limiting for parents and students.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>

**(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The process for continuous improvement is reasonable. It lacks specificity as to how the applicant will measure its investments funded by the grant. It is not clear how the districts will know if adjustments need to be made with any of the projects: personalized learning opportunities, cultivating high-quality educators, and college and career-readiness through alternative pathways to graduation. In other words, a high-quality plan with all the required elements was not specified in this proposal.

The applicant will use the "Plan, Do, Check and Act" (PDCA) model for ongoing refinement and process improvement. It is somewhat confusing as to when this will happen. The application mentions the fall of 2015; this seems rather late into the grant to begin process improvement. Both teachers as members of PLCs and principals will use the model and monitor student progress and results.

Numerous feedback loops were listed. It seems to include most stakeholder groups except students. It was not clear, however, how information and what information from the consortium-wide teams will be distributed through these feedback loops. No timeline for publicly distributing the information was provided.

The applicant also intends to have a Project Evaluation Team and hire an external evaluator. The external evaluator is to conduct both a formative and summative evaluation. It is not clear how and when the formative evaluation will be developed and used for continuous improvement. The Project Evaluation Team will meet monthly. Having a specific evaluation project team from the beginning of the grant has the potential to help with continuous improvement.

<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

This section is rather vague regarding communication and engagement. The application says that "a variety of communications and engagement processes will be utilized." It doesn't identify who is responsible for ensuring those processes actually happen in all member districts. Some of the information that will be shared is provided but no timelines or specific activities of communication or engagement are indicated. No specific high-quality plan was provided.

<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
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**(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

This section of the proposal is confusing and is missing some of the required indicators. There are tables with performance "indicators" and tables with performance "measures." Some of the items are the same but not all are included on both tables. This proposal includes 22 performance indicators. There is little rationale provided as to why a particular applicant-proposed performance measure was selected. In addition, no information was stated regarding how the applicant will review and improve its measures over time if any are insufficient to determine implementation progress.

There are 4 performance indicators in the table "Cultivate High Quality Educators" that are questionable. Two relate to students completing the EXPLORE and PLAN assessments and two are about districts implementing the PLAN assessment and the ASVAB assessment. There is no performance being measured; rather participation is being measured. It's not clear how these proposed measures cultivate high quality educators.

Several of the measures focus on the teachers are doing or accomplishing rather than on the measure of students. Three measures in the table "Alternative Pathways to Graduation" address the number of teachers receiving some type of training and one looks at the number of teachers teaching dual credit courses. This is information that the applicant may want to collect; however, these are not measures of student performance.

Within the (E)(3) Performance Measures Tables, there are several measures with only baseline data. In some instances that data is incomplete or missing. The targets are listed as "TBD." For example, performance on the NWEA has no targets. The measure using state assessment results provides all the requested information.

The applicant does not address all required measures. It included the one on learners having effective teachers and principals but the required measure of learners with "highly" effective teachers and principals could not be found in any of the tables.

<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

Evaluating the effectiveness of investments is somewhat vague. It does state that the outside evaluator and the Project Evaluation Team will evaluate the projects. They will consider both quantitative and qualitative data. The applicant provided a list of deliverables which support particular performance measures. Effectiveness and deliverables are not the same. For example, a significant focus of this grant is having Professional Learning Communities and professional development. Having an RFP for external consultants to provide teacher professional development does not evaluate the effectiveness of the quality of the professional development or the impact of it.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>

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

The applicant included both a budget narrative and appropriate budget tables. The budget is reasonable and sufficient to support the applicant's proposal. The number of personnel funded with the grant is appropriate for the work that needs to be accomplished. The budget was built to support the implementation of the activities outlined in each of the three projects. A significant part of the proposal relates to technology purchases. The applicant recognizes that the technology (iPads) purchased in year 1 of the grant may need to be updated and/or replaced in year 4. The budget reflects this. In addition, funds will support the development of digital platform and learning resources. There are also funds in the budget for the proposed professional development both through Professional Learning Communities and district professional development days.

The applicant provided information on other funds that will support the proposed activities. Each district's funding commitments were listed. The districts will pay \$10 per student, support the additional staff development days, fund the PLC's and provide funds to support some of the technology.

Though there are separate budget summary tables and narratives for each project, there are very few differences in any of the tables. Most of the line items were equally divided among the three projects. This includes the travel, equipment and contractual. The applicant did not provide a sufficient rationale as to why the budget was divided among the three projects. In addition, the applicant did not identify what indirect cost rate is being used and how it was determined to use that rate.

The rationale for travel within the proposal is somewhat vague. It appears that the applicant wants funds in the budget for travel but isn't definitive regarding where, who, why and when.

<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
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**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

There are several planned actions that contribute to the sustainability of the project goals. There is financial support for sustainability; however, some of that funding is soft money and may run out. The districts are committing \$10 per student for professional development and paying for Year 5 for leasing iPads. Districts can also leverage 2% of State general education aid for staff development. The proposal also specifies three strategies to ensure sustainability. These strategies

will occur throughout the grant cycle.

The applicant mentions having the support of local and State leaders. The support in the various letters is for the grant proposal. There is no evidence of support from these leaders specifically for sustainability.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

The primary partnership in this proposal is with the Southwest/West Central Service Cooperative. The districts in the consortium have a history of partnering with this cooperative. It provides support services in the areas of technology, technology integration, business office support and special education. The applicant described a pilot program for students with disabilities. The cooperative will also be involved with the development of educators. This is a potential strength of the proposal.

The proposal includes 8 desired results from the partnerships. These relate to participation and access rather than results. The applicant did not fully complete the Performance Measures table. It listed the measure and which group of students but no baseline data or targets were provided. One cannot tell if these are ambitious measures since they do not measure results and targets are incomplete.

The applicant did not address item (5)(a)-(e). Without these measures it is difficult to judge how the partnership and consortium would build the capacity of staff to assess needs and asset of students, identify and inventory needs and assets of the school and community that are aligned with the goals of improving education and supports, create a decision-making process and infrastructure regarding supports that address individual needs of students, engage parents in decision-making to improve results in addressing needs and assess the applicant's progress in implementing its plan and resolve challenges and problems.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

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

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

This proposal appears to meet Absolute Priority 1. All three projects within the proposal contribute to and support the development and implementation of personalized learning environments. 1-1 technology and extended learning opportunities will be the vehicles; professional development with an emphasis on 21st Century skill and technology integration will enhance the capacity of teachers and leaders; and the move to competency-based rather than time-based learning will change the way learning occurs.

There are concerns, however, in that much planning still needs to occur and decisions need to be made in order to have personalized learning environments. In some ways, this is very much a planning grant in the first few years. The proposal emphasizes 1-1 technology and having digital content. There are many decisions that need to be made regarding technology and data platforms and processes for selecting content. The curriculum, instruction and assessments are to aligned throughout the grant rather than already being in place. Not having this well underway could slow the implementation of meaningful learning plans.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>140</b>
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# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0036MN-3 for Windom Public School District - 0177

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant lists overarching grant goals that are consistent with the four assurances. It is not entirely clear, however, how each of the activities included in the description of the overall vision contribute to these goals. For example, it is unclear how the applicant ties the purchase of iPads for all students to increased student achievement. Tying these purchases to instructional activities such as developing research skills would be an example of how the iPads could be used, but the applicant gives no specific examples. Because of lack of connection between activities, this section scores in the middle range of available points.</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>The applicant selected all schools in the participating districts due to the consistency among them with regard to a high percentage of low-income students and academic needs. With pervasive deficits in student performance in sub-groups across all schools, this selection criterion is appropriate. The application includes a list of all schools that will be included in the proposed activities. The list contains appropriate and complete data on the population to be served. The proposed activities will serve 6,829 students based on current enrollment figures.</p> <p>Having fully met the criteria for this section, the applicant receives full points for this section.</p>		
<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The proposal includes three interwoven projects designed to personalize and improve instruction. The plan includes outcomes such as the development of lessons that integrate technology and college/career ready standards. However, the quality of professional development that is geared towards helping teachers develop these lessons is unclear. As such, the quality of the products to be developed cannot be ascertained. This uncertainty leads to a score in the middle range of points.</p>		
<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant includes baseline data for the districts in the consortium as a whole rather than for each individual school district. As such, it is difficult to see whether the needs and gaps are evenly distributed among all populations to be served by the proposed project. Project goals include reaching benchmarks that would decrease overall achievement gaps for sub-group populations. Goals also include increases to graduation rates and college enrollment rates. For three of the districts, graduation rates are already at 100%. For the other three, increases raise the graduation rates from lower baselines to close to 100%. Similarly, college enrollment rates also increase in all districts from low baseline levels to percentages in the 90s.</p> <p>Because of the lack of specific results for each district in the consortium, the applicant earns a score in the medium range of points.</p>		

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

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	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>The applicant provides aggregated data for each school showing how participating in reforms such as the Flexible School Year have contributed to increased student achievement and decreased achievement gaps during the last four years. The narrative does not, however, discuss how these reforms have been targeted at the persistently lowest-achieving schools. While the gains overall show a track record of success, the lack of detail in this regard impacts the significance of this achievement. The applicant also discusses multiple ways of informing parents about overall school achievement. The consortium's data system, combined with the state's new report card, will provide more information to parents. This data will include achievement gap snapshots as well as site performance data.</p> <p>With the strengths outweighing the weaknesses, the applicant scores in the high end of the medium range for this section.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
<p><b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant partially meets the criteria for this section as evidenced by the "Truth in Taxation" public meetings held each December. However, this process covers general budgeting for school districts only. While patrons have the ability to request more specific school level information, it will not be made easily accessible due to anything written into policy or anything that will come from participation in RTTT.</p> <p>Because of the lack of information about improving accessibility to financial information, the applicant receives low points for this section.</p>		
<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant provides statutory context both for the reforms that are already in place among consortium districts and the activities that are proposed within this proposal. For example, the applicant cites state statute allowing for Flexible Learning Year placement for students. Additionally, with the increased number of required professional development days for teacher, it is also appropriate that the applicant has secured the agreement of the bargaining unit in each district. Collectively, these factors establish a supportive context for the reforms proposed.</p> <p>Having fully responded to the criteria with high-quality information, the applicant receives full points for this section.</p>		
<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>
<p><b>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant includes meeting dates for each district with principals, teachers, and the public. Documentation includes signed memoranda of understanding from the teachers unions, mayors, and community groups. However, it is not clear about how many students, parents, teachers, and community members attended meetings at which the consortium members discussed the proposal. The lack of this information detracts from the evidence of key stakeholder support.</p> <p>As such, the applicant has mostly met the criteria for this section and receives high points.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>13</b>
<p><b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The proposal includes several elements that increase student and parent understanding of what children are learning and how it prepares them for college and careers. These include deploying formative assessments that are accessible by teachers, parents, and students alike; digital portfolios for personalized learning plans; and a range of strategies for acquiring and implementing 1:1 technology among the member districts of the consortium.</p> <p>Each student will also have access to virtual learning, mentorships, and internships that have the potential to individualize</p>		

instruction further. However, it is not clear how these specific opportunities tie back to rigorous academic curriculum. The applicant does not discuss how the provider of digital content will be chosen or what the process will be for matching students to workplace opportunities. These are examples of details that will be planned only after grant funds are awarded. The lack of planning in advance of submitting this proposal detracts from the impact of the information that the applicant has provided.

The applicant only minimally discusses how parents and students will be informed of these opportunities and processes. Missing some details about project activities, the applicant receives a score in the medium range for this section.

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>
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**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The proposal includes a plan for professional development activities, but the deliverables listed are vague. For example, the applicant states that external consultants will be hired to conduct professional development. This does not show evidence that specific trainers or programs have been considered to match with the target population. Additionally, though each teacher will be required to develop a “professional learning plan,” only categorical requirements are given for the plans. The applicant does not provide specific details about the types of professional development that are intended to help teachers transition their instruction into those that can help students gain 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

The applicant states that each member district is in different stages of training in the Danielson or Marzano models for teacher evaluation but does not provide specific details showing where the differences lie. Nonetheless, the proposal includes a detailed description of the data tools that will be available for teachers to use in helping students reach their learning goals. Additionally, the teacher evaluation models include embedded professional development for teachers.

The applicant does not specifically include a plan for assuring that more students have high-quality teachers and principals. With more strengths than weaknesses, this section receives a score in the medium range of points.

**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>6</b>

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

The governance of the grant will include a board consisting of each of the six member district superintendents as well as the director of the partnering service agency. This gives each entity equal voice in execution of grant project activities and the extent to which changes are needed as the grant proceeds.

The extent to which school leadership teams will have flexibility under the proposal is unclear. For example, the applicant states that while school schedules of the six consortium districts are standardized and may have to be altered, there is no explanation of how this will be done or who will be involved in the decision-making.

Similarly, the applicant plans to submit to each district’s board of education a policy to allow students to progress and earn credit at their own pace. These policies have neither been written nor passed at this time.

For student demonstration of mastery, the applicant only gives two examples from one district of how this will look. Nothing is given from the other five districts.

The example given of differentiation of instruction reads more as a description of ability-grouping, which as a practice does not so much allow students to work at their own paces as it does segregate populations within schools.

With several ineffective components in response to the scoring criteria, this section receives a score in the low end of the medium range of points.

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
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**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

All stakeholders will have multiple training opportunities each year on the data system that will be deployed under this proposal. Additionally, the applicant has multiple points of access for technical support. The system to be developed will meet open data format and interoperability requirements.

However, the applicant does not include information about the selection of the data system. Additionally, the system will not be deployed until the final year of the grant. This lack of information is a concern as far as the effectiveness and timeliness of the project.

Having more strengths than weaknesses, this section receives points in the medium range for this section.

### 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 applicant describes both existing and planned structures for ensuring continuous improvement during the timeframe of project activities. Planned activities include convening the Project Evaluation Team monthly during the first year of the grant and then quarterly thereafter. Existing activities also include outlets for sharing progress of grant activities.</p> <p>It is not clear from the narrative, however, what information district leaders intend to share with the public. For example, the narrative does not specifically address a process that for discussing the extent to which RTTT investments have yielded the anticipated gains in student achievement. Accordingly, it is hard to determine how much external stakeholder involvement will impact the continuous improvement cycle.</p> <p>The applicant receives a score in the middle range of points for this section.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<p><b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant lists several methods that will be utilized for communicating with stakeholders as well as receiving input about the progress of grant activities, but the information provided about these is vague. For example, it is not clear how frequently "internet cafes" will be convened, who will be invited, and what will guide the discussion to be held. Also, while the applicant plans to adopt best strategies for the use of social media for communicating with stakeholders, it is not clear that this is an effective way of communicating complex information with stakeholders. The applicant receives a score in the medium range for this section.</p>		
<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
<p><b>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant does not include a rationale for the selection of the 21 performance measures included in the proposal. Many of them have baseline values and targets that are yet to be determined. As such, it is hard to see how these particular subgroups and/or assessments were chosen. The applicant also does not describe how data will be reviewed and implementation progress will be judged.</p> <p>This section receives a score in the low range of points.</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 applicant will utilize overall project data teams as well as district and site data teams to evaluate the effectiveness of the grant activities. It is unclear, however, how the applicant plans to evaluate purchases or training activities, and how those expenditures will be linked directly to student results. Many of the project outcomes listed are better described as deliverables rather than outcomes. For example, convening PLCs is an event to be completed. While these collaborations may improve student outcomes, having them is not the outcome in and of itself.</p> <p>This section receives a score in the middle range of points.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
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<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 applicant's budget request of just under \$20 million is spread across three project categories. Appropriately, most of the costs are also divided across the three categories. For example, the personnel costs for the project staff, and the technology purchases such as iPads for all students, are expenses to be borne in all three categories.</p> <p>One exception to this is with the third project, Alternative Pathways to graduation. Since this only impacts secondary students, and the other two projects impact all students, purchases should have been coded less to this project than the other two.</p> <p>The budget also includes significant contributions of funds from the district and an explanation of how project activities will continue after the grant period ends.</p> <p>This section receives a score in the high end of the middle range of points.</p>		
<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
<p><b>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant plans to rely on state funds for sustainability. It is unclear if the applicant has calculated the ongoing cost to sustain project activities. It is also unclear how funding that is currently being used for non-project activities can be diverted to sustaining the grant. Additionally, none of the letters of support indicate any commitment beyond the period of federal funding.</p> <p>This section receives a score in the low end of the middle range of points.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
<p><b>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The role of the applicant's project partner (Southwest/West Central Service Cooperative) is evident throughout the proposal. Already interwoven into professional development and technical service plans of all districts that are members of this consortium, SW/WC also helps students connect with post-secondary opportunities. Unfortunately, all of the baseline and target performance measures remain to be determined. As such, it cannot be determined if this partnership is likely to lead to have a significant impact.</p> <p>The competitive preference priority section also does not address integrated services for students or building capacity for staff.</p> <p>This section receives a score in the low range of points.</p>		

**Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments**

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Not Met</b>
<p><b>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>While the applicant has elements that address building core educational services and developing strategies for personalization of instruction to students at all grade levels, the proposal as a whole is not coherent in its approach. Details lacking include specifics related to goals and professional development. Much of the technology to be purchased seems to be the goal in and of itself, and there are several sections that read as a "plan to plan."</p>		

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>134</b>
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# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0036MN-4 for Windom Public School District - 0177

### 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>
<b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The applicant presents a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that addresses the core educational assurance areas through three distinct but interconnected projects: (1) personalized learning environments, (2) high-quality educators, and (3) alternative pathways to graduation.</p> <p>The proposal's personalized learning component is geared to the 21st Century Partnership's standards, and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy. A strength of the proposal is that it describes in detail the applicant's plans to (1) align curriculum, instruction, and formative assessments with individual student abilities and aspirations; (2) provide each student with access to 21st Century Technology; and notably most innovative, (3) support individual students by using data to provide time, structure and equipment needed for that student to learn at a high level.</p> <p>In the high-quality educators project, the applicant proposes to build upon its existing professional development and mentoring and induction program to focus on building capacity, knowledge, and skill to deliver the 21st Century Learning Experiences. One notable way they propose to do this is through the digitized mass personalized learning (MPL) program that identifies teachers needing improvement in specific areas and provides them with digitally-created professional development coaching modules.</p> <p>The applicant proposes to provide in the alternative pathways to graduation project,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• virtual learning opportunities such as through 1 – 1 digitized materials,</li> <li>• extended learning opportunities such as grouping by ability, and</li> <li>• opportunity for students to earn dual credit through arrangements with local colleges and universities.</li> </ul> <p>These elements are discussed in detail (a strength of this proposal in general) in terms of how learners would have the opportunity to modify the pace of their learning as well as deepen their learning experiences in specific areas of interest.</p> <p>The applicant also describes how the proposed project will expand upon existing projects that are having positive results. For example, in order to achieve comprehensive, district-wide development, implementation, and sustainability of personalized learning plans for every student served by the program, the district currently supports four pilot projects incorporating 1:1 iPad2 technologies in Kindergarten, 4th grade, 7th grade science, and two high school business classes. 1:1 application of technology is especially apropos to personalized learning because it provides a powerful tool with which the student can pace their learning to their abilities. Another example of scaling an existing program is a mentorship initiative where seniors can apply to spend part of the school day learning about, shadowing, and ultimately conducting original work in a field of interest.</p> <p>In summary, the applicant presents a well-conceived, highly organized, and evidenced-supported vision that presents every indication of being ambitious and achievable.</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		

BREA has determined that collectively, all 20 of its schools meet the competition's eligibility requirements and will participate in Project IGNITE! Table A2 documents this by indicating that the six BREA districts include 590 educators that serve a total of 6,829 students, of which 40% qualify for free and reduced lunch and 1,270 are high-need students.

Since the proposed process clearly describes the anticipated outcomes of its approach to personalized learning, high-quality educators, and alternative pathways to graduation, there is reason to expect that BREA's implementation of its reform proposal will support high-quality LEA-level and school-level application geared to include all participants.

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

**10**

**10**

**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant provides a high-quality plan for meeting its goals. For each of its three projects (personalized learning, high quality educators, and alternative pathways), the proposal specifies in its Logic Model, its Key Initiatives, and its Short Term, Intermediate, and Long-Term Outcomes/deliverables that relate to each initiative/activity. The budget narrative describes the personnel who are responsible for implementing the activities. For example, the Logic Model's Professional Development initiative specifies the use of Professional Learning Communities (PLC), instructional coaches, and Technology integration specialists, all proven modalities to help teachers with assessment, 21st century skills, differentiated instruction, and personalized learning.

All the schools in BREA (the applicant's region) are participants in this proposed project. The project's design, however, is well positioned to be scaled up as a model for other schools in its region with which BREA has a history of successful collaboration as a member of the Flexible Learning Year (FLY) Consortium. The applicant also is partnered with SW/WC Service Cooperative, an organization working with and providing support for districts in the region. In Year 4 of the project, laboratory classrooms would be set up at SW/WC and/or a partnering post-secondary institution providing the opportunity to share the experience aspects of the project. The applicant also proposes to share learning from the project through means such as the Minnesota EdTalks, school conferences and symposiums. They also intend to send teachers, administrators, and other leaders to local and national conferences to disseminate the results of its initiatives, and to get feedback on the project's reforms and to create a regional symposium on Project IGNITE!

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

**10**

**8**

**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

BREA proposes to provide each student with learning opportunities that address college- and career-readiness academic standards along with 21st Century skills that include critical thinking and problem solving, the application of information technology, teamwork and collaboration, creativity and innovation, and recognition of diversity. The district proposes to support this ambitious undertaking through personalized learning and flexible time options for students, and by providing all staff with continuing and job-embedded professional development. These discrete yet complementary teaching and learning projects are presented in the plan in sufficient detail in terms of goals, activities, outcomes, timelines, and management, to engender confidence in their viability. Therefore, the applicant's vision can be considered achievable and likely to result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity.

BREA has proposed goals for this criterion based on the Annual Measurable Objects (AMOs) methodology set for each ESEA subgroup as part of the Minnesota ESEA flexibility waiver granted to the state in February 2013. Since Minnesota's AMOs for graduation rates has not been approved yet, they are not included. Targets for graduation rates, college enrollment, and postsecondary degree attainment are set using the same methodology of reducing the gaps in performance by half by the 2016-17 school year. The applicant provided the following data that relate to and support its goals.

- Performance on Summative Assessments  
The 2012-2013 performance data illustrates that Consortia-wide students are meeting the proficiency standards, particularly in the lower elementary grades. In general, the improvement goals are reasonable, but it is noted

that the Limited English and SPED goals through 2017 seem ambitious, given their low base line in relation to the other sub-groups.

- Decreasing Achievement Gaps Again, the improvement goals are reasonable, but it is noted that the Limited English and SPED goals through 2017 seem ambitious, given their low base line in relation to the other sub-groups
- Graduation Rates  
The districts within the BREA Consortium already have high graduation rates, with the lowest at 80%. By the 2017-2018 school year, the goal for each district within the Consortium of 97%-100% is ambitious but not unreasonable, given the anticipated impact of the project on student motivation for career and college.
- College Enrollment  
The 2013 college enrollment rates for the districts in the Consortium vary from 78% to 96% and two to the districts do not currently collect college enrollment. Although ambitious, ultimately the goals projected may not be overly ambitious given the aspects of the proposal that emphasize the value of and preparation for college and career.

Selection criterion (A)(4) requires a consortium applicant to include a separate table for each member LEA in a consortium in addition to the LEAs overall. BREA does this for Graduate Rates and College Enrollment, but not for Performance on Summative Assessments and Decreasing Achievement Gaps, as required.

## 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>11</b>

### (B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

BREA attributes increases in student achievement and equity in learning and teaching over the past four years to several initiatives that, although not empirically proven, can reasonably be assumed to have at least contributed to improvement because their implementation coincided with those increases. Those initiatives include

- Professional development through local Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).
- Membership in the Flexible Learning Year (FLY) consortium. Externally administered surveys show that students, faculty, and parents consider participation in the FLY was related to a number improved test scores.
- Response to Intervention (RtI) that identifies and supports individual student learning and behavior needs.
- Project Discovery, a program that identifies students' strengths, preferences, and interests.

In the area of special education, the majority of BREA districts increased their proficiency index scores in both reading and mathematics. In reading, the average district increase was +7.33; in mathematics, the change from 2011 to 2012 was +8.62.

Free and reduced lunch students posted increased scores averaging +1.6 in reading and slightly greater in mathematics.

BREA districts have a 2012 graduation rate averaging 89.3% which compares favorably to the state's average of nearly 80%.

This criterion calls for the applicant to including a description, charts or graphs, raw student data, and other evidence that demonstrates its ability to achieve ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools. There is no evidence in the proposal that this requirement is addressed.

The applicant states that it provides access by community members to student performance data provided for this criterion by a notice placed in the local newspapers and directing community members to the district website or the school district office if they wish to receive a paper copy. There is a distinction, however, between 'availability' which is what is actually

provided, and 'access' which involves the wherewithal to acquire that data and the ability and willingness to use it in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services.

<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 applicant posts district revenues and expenditures on its district websites. Public meetings are held annually in which the public is provided a breakdown of expenditures by staff, teacher, administration and other expenditure items. There is no indication that actual personnel salaries are available to the public. Also missing, as required by this criterion, is the extent to which the applicant makes available school-level expenditures from State and local funds:

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

The applicant attests that all the elements of its proposal are permissible under Minnesota state law, requirements of the grant, rules of the Federal Department of Education, and the State of Minnesota Department of Education. On the local level, each district in the consortium was given permission and approval by their respective Board of Education to implement the personalized learning environments described in its proposal. BREAs profess to have statutory authority to offer through Minnesota Statute 124D.12, 2011 that allows districts to "evaluate, plan and employ the use of flexible learning year programs . . . to suitably fulfill the educational needs of its pupils."

The BREAs districts have already made and propose additional investments in technology infrastructure, hardware, and software to support personalized learning. For example, the entire district has wireless access. In addition, all participating districts have virtualized servers and their buildings are compatible to wireless devices, conditions necessary to implement personalized learning.

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

Seventeen letters of support for the proposal are included in the appendix of the BREAs application. These include support from the Minnesota Department of Education, the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA), the University of Minnesota Extension 4-H Youth Development Program, local PTA and PTO organizations, and several members of the Minnesota congressional delegation. Letters of support and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) from all of BREAs bargaining units are also included in the appendix. The applications from all five BREAs districts received support and approval by the Minnesota Commissioner of Education.

In terms of meeting the criterion for the Involvement of Stakeholders (teachers, students, communities) in the Development of the applicant's proposal,

- Principals were informed and provided input and feedback during administrative meetings with the superintendents.
- Teacher leaders met with their respective superintendent and feedback from teachers leaders was brought back to consortium meetings of superintendents for further discussion.
- All unions within the consortium received a copy of the completed application and were provided an extended timeframe to review and to comment on the proposal.
- Teachers, students, and families had the opportunity to be engaged in the development of the RTT-D application through public comments at their respective districts' Board of Education meeting.
- Various community organizations such as the local chamber of commerce and Kiwanis and Rotary clubs were asked to provide feedback.

Overall, it appears that superintendents took the lead in developing the proposal with feedback and input from principals, teachers, school board, and public meetings.

This criterion can be considered to be appropriately addressed.

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

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Score</b>
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<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>
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**(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has a high-quality plan for its goal to improve learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment for all students. The proposal provides a schematic that clearly outlines the activities, personnel, and timelines for implementing personalized learning opportunities. Activities are aligned with the goal. Some notable activities and how they might enable the applicant to meet its goal are

- Creation of personalized learning plans for each student in BREA districts This will integrate 21st Century Skills into the core curricula and provide resources and support for students to track and manage their own learning. Minnesota statute 120B.023, Subd.2 had adopted or is planning to adopt rigorous standards to prepare students for college and career. BREA proposes to incorporate these standards into student's plans, so that each student may monitor their progress in meeting these standards. An example of such a plan is included in the Appendix.
- Training of teachers to guide students in goal-setting and identifying interests. This will tie these interests to student's personalized learning plans.
- Teacher, student, and parent teams that will identify how student interests can be used to build deeper learning experiences. This can help to close identified achievement gaps.
- Collaboration with Educate Pathways to implement a system for mass personalized learning. This allows teachers to manage and track multiple students' learning achievement, and identify students who need remediation as well as those who are ready for acceleration.
- Students and parents will have access to student's individualized learning plan at any point in time. This allows students, for example, to be flexible in time and place as to when and how they will learn and be assessed on the various mandatory standards, in order to show proficiency.

Other relevant activities include building a digitally-accessible library available locally and able to be upscaled for use by other districts.

The BREA consortium proposes to provide extended learning experiences for the underserved student populations in their schools by providing them, in collaboration with other youth development organizations, such as the Minnesota 4-H program, with opportunities to experience connections to student college and career-readiness standards. Other proposed options for personalizing learning for underserved or high need student populations include the use of mentorship and/or internship programs in collaboration with members of our communities. Although such accommodations are proposed, there is little information as to what such experiences will entail or how and when they will take place. Consequently, it is unclear whether the requirement in this criterion to provide accommodations and high-quality strategies for high-need students to help ensure that they are on track toward meeting college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements is addressed.

It is noted that one school (Jackson) in the region has a 1:1 ipad pilot program in which training was provided to students early in the process. There were also several parents' nights to teach parents how to use the ipad. Although the proposal does not specify training students to use ipads, the fact that the pilot was mentioned along with a general statement that the project will build on existing pilots, can be considered as an indication that this would be the case.

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>
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**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready. The application provides a detailed implementation plan that clearly indicates activities, personnel responsibilities, and timelines. Activities are to be managed by the Assistant to the Project Director and delivered under the direction of Staff Development Committees that are part of the LEAs' District Leadership Teams.

The activities of the project that address this criterion include training and coaching on formative assessments and implementation, integrating 21st Century Skills into the curriculum; effective use and integration of teaching, learning, and assessment technologies in relationship to differentiated instruction and personalized learning; student learning plans and student goal setting; and project based learning. Sustained professional development will take place through Personalized Learning Communities (PLCs) in order to develop learning environments that allow for student personalized learning. PLCs also provide the opportunity for teachers to collaborate with peers in order to design learning environments that allow for personalized learning.

New teachers will have the support of a mandatory induction and mentoring program. teacher mentor/induction program that includes coaching and guided discussion focused on the practice of effective lesson development, questioning, formative assessment, intervention strategies, and professionalism.

The variety, specificity, timelines, and management of these activities indicate the applicant’s awareness of their relationship to the improvement of the practice of educators through professional development opportunities that focus on the effective implementation of personalized learning, provide opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks, and the use of tools, data, and resources to accelerate student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements.

Although these professional development initiatives are proposed and discussed in relation to the project’s goals, there is not sufficient information to indicate how:

- Implementation of 1:1 technology by which individual learning plans will be primarily created, managed, and communicated.
- Creation of a supportive environment that includes the use of technology to analyze and personalized data, structure deeper student learning systems, and inform stakeholders of student progress will occur.
- The Educate System School Leadership Teams learning management system designed to ensure that educators and school leaders have access to information to track and accelerate student’s progress toward being college- and career-ready will be used on an individual school basis.

All BREA schools have implemented growth-based evaluations systems using either Danielson Framework for Teaching or Marzano Methods Evaluations for tenured staff. Both teacher and principal evaluation system will use a value-added assessment methodology starting in the 2014-15 school year, where 35% of the evaluations will consider student data. The applicant proposes to use evaluation data to guide and plan for staff development training.

Overall, the applicant addresses this criterion in a comprehensive and organized way that, except for lack of clarity regarding flexibility among schools and impact of professional development, evokes confidence that its ambitious plan is 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>15</b>

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

BREA districts are organized to provide support and services in personalizing learning to all participating schools, their teachers, and students. The proposal calls for the project to be overseen by a Governing Board comprised of the six school district superintendents and the executive director of the SW/WC Service Cooperative (SW/WC). As signatories to the application as well as their LEA leadership roles and responsibilities, the superintendents have sufficient autonomy and authority to direct the implementation of the personalized learning plans throughout their districts.

A Grievance Committee consisting of the School Board Chair from each of the six school districts and the Board Chair from the SW/WC Service Cooperative would decide contested issues.

Each Building Council will be made up of the principal and several teachers, representing the various programs in the school. Their responsibility would be to check implementation, monitoring the integrity of the program and school-level budgets.

In addition to conventional ways, students would have the opportunity to demonstrate mastery in several ways. For example, through the “Eagle Project” in which all seniors use their learning to create a project in the local community that they must complete before they graduate.

An especially innovative concept that is discussed in the proposal, but not specifically slated for implementation, is that of basing classrooms on the individual student’s mastery of the course content as opposed to the time spent on a topic.

Students would be grouped according to their competency level in various subjects. In preparation for this innovation, the probability is stated that the BREA school boards will pass policies allowing for students to learn at their own pace..

All students, including English Learners and students with disabilities, would be grouped together based on their demonstrated skill level. Within those groups, students will receive targeted instruction and will move at their own pace.

Overall, the proposal presents a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator (as defined in this notice), and level of the education system (classroom, school, and LEA) with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed.

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
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**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The BREA application calls for all students and teachers to be given computers/iPads for school and home use. All schools within the BREA districts currently have Internet access and wireless networks. Students are also able to use Internet at the schools after hours as well as at public libraries. BREA will conduct a needs assessment of all families to determine Internet and technology access in Year 1 of the project. Where families do not have Internet access, the BREA districts will provide WiFi hotspots for students in economic need, including enabling students to connect while on school buses. Plans are for assignments to be designed so that all of the materials a student needs for coursework can be downloaded and/or saved onto the student’s individual computer/iPad. The applicant is recognized for having or proposing these specifics because they are among the resources necessary to the personalization, environment, instruction, and monitoring of student academic interests and needs.

Technical support is planned to be provided during school hours for educators and students. Each BREA district will use technology integrationist teachers to help teachers and students; each building will have a technology assistant available throughout the school day, as well as after school.

An information technology system is proposed that will allow parents to export and import data from various electronic learning systems, such as PLATO or K12 Learning.

If the project is funded, BREA will purchase a system such as Infinite Campus, TIES/COGNOS, Power School, or Skyward that allow for such sharing of information. The districts will also purchase or design an interoperable data system that uses a common, established structure that allows data to flow from one system to another in a non-proprietary and open format. Allowing parents and students to download their data electronically makes it possible for a parent or student to combine data from school, extracurricular activities, or online learning experiences that students may participate in on their own. These data can form the basis of electronic personal learning profiles and can inform students’ personal learning plans.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>

**(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant offers the following process for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process. According to the BREA proposal:

- School principals in conjunction with teams of their school’s teachers, instructional coaches, and extended learning opportunity coordinators would determine areas where there are opportunities for improvement and where there are program successes will utilize data systems to monitor student progress and results. Starting this process at the school level will allow attention to be paid to their specific needs in addition to generic needs of the districts. Although this is a laudable strategy, it is not clear what criteria will be used to make these determinations.
- A consortium-wide team will meet monthly to focus on the continuous improvement model, to analyze data through feedback loops, and to offer ongoing guidance for individual, school-wide, and consortium-wide staff development.

Who will comprise this team is not clear.

- A Project Evaluation Team (PET) comprised of district superintendents, curriculum directors, project coordinators, staff development coaches, an external evaluator/coach, and administrative representatives from each district will focus on finalizing an implementation plan for a formative and summative evaluation of the project. The PET will meet quarterly in a rotational model to apply the evaluation to the program implementation efforts. It is not clear whether this process evaluates on a consortium and/or participating district level.
- The results of the evaluation will be presented at public forums for all stakeholders and the PET will offer action plans and steps to address an ongoing cycle of improvement. It is not clear, however, how or when information will be shared.

In addition, Professional Learning Communities (PLC) on both district and consortium levels will provide an ongoing venue for teachers to continuously evaluate and act on student performance data to improve instruction.

**(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)**

5

3

**(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant proposes to employ processes such as surveys, focus groups, community listening cafés, and forums to allow the Project Evaluation Team (PET) to maintain ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. The communications tools and strategies proposed include evaluation reports from the PET, management and leadership team meetings, consortium-wide staff development opportunities, and ongoing review of process improvements. Although these are viable processes, there is little in the proposal regarding detail pertaining to the nature of these surveys and structure of meetings.

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

5

2

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

The applicant has identified three goals and 22 performance indicators that are aligned to them. for example:

**Personalized Learning Opportunities:** PreK-3, 4-8. Using AIMS web assessment and/or FAST assessment tools, the BREA districts will realize an annual increase of 3% in reading comprehension.

**High Quality Educators:** All grades. There will be an annual increase in the number and percent of learners whose teacher of record and principal is considered effective as measured by a 5% decrease in the achievement gap in mathematics and reading, with a goal of 100% by 2018

**Alternative Pathways to Graduation:** Grades 9-12. There will be an annual increase in graduation rates following Minnesota's ESEA waiver calculations (section A). By 2017, all BREA district subgroups will graduate a minimum of 97% of their students.

(It is noted that the chart headings on High Quality Educators and Alternative Pathways to Graduation are reversed).

BREA is currently creating a plan of how performance measures will be implemented and measured for the duration of the grant and beyond. They plan to use Educate Pathways, a learning management system, to ensure that educators and school leaders have access to information to track and accelerate student's progress toward being college- and career-ready.

The lowered score for this criterion is based on lack of detail about BREA's rationale for selecting measure, and how the measures will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action.

<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
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**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The implementation timeline of the BREA project's evaluation is notable because it is a sustainability strategy carried out on a regular basis as a part of the ongoing design rather than after a project has ended. This commendable process will allow ongoing analysis and modification of the program..

The BREA Project Evaluation Team (PET), in conjunction with the external evaluator, would make objective, data-driven suggestions for process improvement consistent with the project goals, indicators, and performance measures. Evaluators will consider quantitative data such as student achievement, graduation rates, career and surveys. Qualitative data will include analysis of student progress, professional development, the development, and implementation of digital platforms for individual learning plans.

PET will develop survey instruments, observation protocols, and rubrics to measure teacher efficacy, student engagement, constituent satisfaction, professional development effectiveness and implementation, the levels of use of technology, and the effects on overall youth development.

A charted plan in the proposal provides the overall performance measures and associated deliverables for the program's three projects.

**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>

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

BREA clearly and in detail, identifies the funds it hopes to be awarded through the RttT-D grant, all of which are reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the proposal. The applicant provides a thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities that link expenses with initiatives.

The budget includes one major one-time investment that is actually split into two sections for laudable and practical reasons. The purchase of technologies including iPads for students and iPad covers are to be purchased in years 1 and 4 of the project to avoid interest costs with an outside agency, sustainability beyond the grant period, and consideration of potential loss, damage to equipment and upgrading of current available technology.

Other relevant expenses include

- national sight visits to review and evaluate other successful districts in order to build on the lessons learned;
- the development of a digital platform to align the curriculum with learning targets and allow educators, students, and parents to monitor progress;
- a digitally-accessible library and textbook resource center for schools that lends itself to virtual learning, online content, and expended opportunities beyond the school day; and
- a number of positions related to conducting and managing RttT-D project activities.

Listed revenue from sources other than RttT-D are mostly from already funded state and national grants. Each participating district will contribute \$10 per student toward the program. The addition of WiFi hot spots in locations of need (such as school buses) will be funded locally.

It is noted that items with a value of less than \$5,000, such as laptops, printers, and desktop computers, can be considered as supplies. If the BREA consortium's capitalization policy defines these items as equipment, the applicant may include them under the equipment category in the budget as it has don with the understanding that they may not apply their indirect cost rates to equipment.

<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
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**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has obtained support for its RttT-D grant application (fully documented in the Appendix) from local chambers of commerce, PTAs, and each of the mayors, the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Education, both of Minnesota's U.S. Senators, and various statewide organizations, including the Minnesota Rural Education Association. Additionally, each participating district has committed \$10 per student to continue through the post-grant period toward continued professional development focused on creating and sustaining personalized learning plans for all students served by their districts.

The applicant has structured its budget to commit to the iPad technology beyond the scope of the grant. Districts will assume responsibility for the leasing of iPads in Year 5 (the first year after the RTT-D project will end).

One of the program's components builds a partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education and area universities which should help sustain its initiatives.

No optional estimated post-grant budget is proposed. However, BREA has proposed three major strategies to ensure sustainability and has provided for each, a timeline with responsibilities and activities for review both during and after the grant period. These strategies are

- Annually evaluate the program's impact with districts and outside funding resources.
- Reallocate district funds in order of program impact to students.
- Present results for expansion through state through legislative funding.
- Develop working timeline and plan to meet ongoing funding needs with identified Universities, for profit and non-profit entities.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>

#### Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides little evidence that its proposed program meets this priority. The priority calls for the applicant to partner with public or private resources to provide additional student and family supports that address the social, emotional, or behavioral needs of the participating students. These are areas of non-academic issues that can potentially negatively impact academic achievement of any, but especially at risk students.

BREA designates special education (SPED) students as recipients of this priority's support services. Those services are provided by the Southwest/West Central Service Cooperative (SW/WC Service Cooperative) and the Avera Marshall Hospital to SPED students and students with disabilities. They include academic programs like Knowledge Bowl and Spelling Bee, and interest-based programs like Young Artists, Young Authors, and Culinary Arts. Another program involves a job coach and staff working with the students and their individualized educational program team to develop the interpersonal and job skills. Project Search, a pilot program, provides an opportunity for students with disabilities to transition from high school to community employment during the school year.

This is the only weak area of an otherwise well developed, ambitious, and achievable plan. The low score for this section reflects that assessment.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

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

#### Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant meets Priority 1 by coherently and comprehensively addressing the core educational assurance areas required by this grant application by implementing three distinct but interconnected projects (personalized learning environments, high-quality educators, and alternative pathways to graduation) that are geared to both its state's adapted college- and career-ready academic standards and to the 21st Century Partnership's standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the

workplace and to compete in the global economy. The proposal describes in detail the applicant's plans to

(1) align curriculum, instruction, and formative assessments with individual student abilities and aspirations;

(2) provide each student with access to 21st Century Technology;

(3) support individual students by using data to provide time, structure and equipment needed for that student to learn at a high level;  
and

(4) build teacher's capacity, knowledge, and skill to personalize instruction and deliver 21st Century Learning Experiences.

Since all schools and students in the BREa area will participate in the program, it has the potential to expand student access to the most effective educators, decrease achievement gaps across student groups, and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

**Total**

**210**

**179**