U.S. Department of Education - EDCAPS
G5-Technical Review Form (New)

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Waterford Research Institute (S411C240154)
Reader #1:   **********

		Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Significance			
1. Significance		20	18
Quality of Project Design			
1. Project Design		30	27
Quality of Project Personnel			
1. Project Personnel		10	9
Quality of the Management Plan			
1. Management Plan		10	10
	Sub Total	70	64
Priority Questions			
Competitive Preference Priority			
Competitive Preference Priority 1			
1. Promoting Equity		3	3
Competitive Preference Priority 2			
1. Impact of COVID-19		3	2
	Sub Total	6	5
	Total	76	69

Technical Review Form

Reader #1:   **********

Applicant: Waterford Research Institute (S411C240154)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factor:

Reader's Score: **18**

   Sub

1. **(1) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies. (20 points)**

Strengths:

The applicant has devised an innovative program for rural areas to ease the transition to and from kindergarten. Studies are cited by the applicant stressing the importance of high-quality early childhood programs for disadvantaged children and the dividends paid later. (e-14) The lack of available pre-school and early childhood programs impacts rural areas to a greater extent and was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. School districts in rural areas were reluctant to spend emergency dollars on early childhood and transition education. Thus, this proposal is significant because it attempts to fill that gap using technology to ramp up the benefits for disadvantaged rural students. The applicant will try to minimize summer learning loss. Started in 2020 immediately after the beginning of the pandemic, this program is now attempting to bridge learning gaps in literacy and math for younger rural students and scale the model throughout other states. An evaluation will serve to document the benefits of the program in a provider setting rather than an in-home setting and will account for differences in performance of students in a variety of settings. (e-14-17)

Weaknesses:

More details are needed on how this model is innovative compared to the original model or how it differs from the earlier model.(e-14-17)

   Reader's Score: **18**

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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

Reader's Score: 27

1. **(1) The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework. (10 points)**

   Strengths:

   The applicant demonstrates that there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research. Various models were used to forestall learning loss in literacy and math in the summers before and after kindergarten and the results were not consistent. The amount of time the learning aids were used, and the setting appear to make a difference in beginning and ending scores. The applicant desires to study more in-depth the reasons behind these differences in order to standardize the program in other school districts and settings. (e-18-19) This is an assessment of an early childhood model used after the pandemic to determine replicability to other settings. A proven logic model (Appendix A) underlies this program. Key elements include adaptive software, adaptive assessments, educational technology, recruitment of local and community providers, onboarding/orientation, family educator engagement, and reports. The cost is low and transportation issues can be minimized by using the software at home. Parental preferences can be met; funding streams can be maximized; and the program has the ability to ramp up, if necessary, to meet scale.

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses noted.

   Reader's Score: 10

2. **(2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable. (5 points)**

   Strengths:

   (e-25-26) The goals, objectives, and outcomes are clearly specified and measurable. They revolve around two key factors: 1) to develop and refine the Summer Learning Path (SLP) program (pilot study) and 2) to enhance student readiness for school (impact and implementation study). (e-45-47) Objectives, outcomes/outputs, and measures relate to collaboration, partners, success of various implementation methods, enhancing school readiness, and evaluating and disseminating program outcomes. Each of these can be readily measured and used to determine what approaches have worked and what can be continued into additional locales.

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses noted.

   Reader's Score: 5

3. **(3) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs. (15 points)**

   Strengths:

   The design of the project is appropriate to and will successfully address the needs of the target population, who are young, rural children. (e-10) The model will expand from its original location to other locales and will involve the participation of an Historically Black College and University (HBCU), which will enhance its significance and replicability. The involvement of the local education agencies and state education agencies will enhance its value to other locales seeking to improve the performance of pre-K and post-K students to put them on the road to success in their future educational pursuits. The applicant will gain knowledge about the success at their first attempt in order to scale the project to other states. They will learn what methods and settings had the greatest impact in order to scale the successes and learn from the less successful attempts.

Sub

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not sufficiently address how it would address the needs of English Language Learners and those with disabilities. (e-10). There are no specific commitments from the school districts in their letters of support. (e-187)

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the following factor:**

Reader's Score: 9

Sub

1. **(1) The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. In addition, the Secretary considers the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel. (10 points)**

Strengths:

The applicant has a clear focus on the types of individuals it employs for its projects and the type of organizational culture it is trying to maintain. (e-27-28) They seek a diverse workforce and a workforce that represents the types of communities they serve. They welcome the unique contributions of individuals of varying races, cultures, backgrounds, religions, ethnicities, educational levels, languages spoken, countries of origin, ethnicities, gender orientations, etc. A number of the employees served on previous iterations of this project. There is a focus on equity of access. The partnership with Jackson State University demonstrates the applicant's desire to include a wide variety of thought partners and organizations. (e-47-58, Appendices C and D) The applicant provides details on the diverse and qualified staff that it has already employed on various projects leading up to the current project. Each has a unique background befitting their role in the project, including prior training and experience in similar project settings.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide a specific plan for creating a diverse workforce or to locate diverse candidates should they need to fill a vacant position. (e-27)

Reader's Score: 9

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources and quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 10

     Sub

1. **(1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.**

   Strengths:

   (e-58-67) The applicant strongly details its management plan by delineating the goals, activities, and objectives of the project, the responsible parties, a detailed timeline for implementation, and the type of data collection necessary for each phase of the project. Each individual's role on the project is clearly spelled out, as is the timeline for their involvement. (e-68) Local areas, with the consultation of parents, Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and local advisory councils, will have input into the type of program implemented in the area. As the applicant states, student needs, partnerships, the promotion of equity, project sustainability, and other strategic factors will all be taken into account during the pursuit of project goals to align with budget and timeline. (e-28-30) Phase I and Phase II activities are spelled out. Important foci, such as dissemination and adherence to priorities, have been worked into the project management. The budget items, including consultant costs, have been clearly spelled out for the five-year period. Matching funds have been detailed for the project as well.

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses noted.

     Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 1:**

   Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: Implementers and Partners (up to 3 points)

   Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate how the project will be implemented by or in partnership with one or more of the following entities:
   (a) Community colleges (as defined in the NIA)
   (b) Historically Black colleges and universities (as defined in the NIA)
   (c) Tribal Colleges and Universities (as defined in the NIA)
   (d) Minority-serving institutions (as defined in the NIA)

   Strengths:

   (e-20-21) The applicant has met Competitive Preference Priority (CPP) 1, Promoting Equity in Student Access, by partnering with Jackson State University in Mississippi, an HBCU. As indicated by the applicant, HBCUs have engendered trust in historically Black rural communities in the South and will be an excellent partner to test the efficacy of this early childhood model. The university will assist the applicant in partnering with local organizations to modify the program and to serve on advisory committees to best serve local children.

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

 1. **Competitive Preference Priority 2:**

Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Students, Educators, and Faculty: Community Asset-Mapping and Needs Assessment and Evidence-Based Instructional Approaches and Supports (up to 3 points).

Projects that are designed to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including impacts that extend beyond the duration of the pandemic itself, on the students most impacted by the pandemic, with a focus on underserved students and the educators who serve them through the following priority areas:

(a) Conducting community asset-mapping and needs assessments that may include an assessment of the extent to which students, including subgroups of students, have become disengaged from learning, including students not participating in in-person or remote instruction, and specific strategies for reengaging and supporting students and their families; and

(b) Using evidence-based instructional approaches and supports, such as professional development, coaching, ongoing support for educators, high-quality tutoring, expanded access to rigorous coursework and content across K-12, and expanded learning time to accelerate learning for students in ways that ensure all students have the opportunity to successfully meet challenging academic content standards without contributing to tracking or remedial courses.

Strengths:

The applicant has responded to CPP 2, Mitigating the Ongoing Impact of COVID-19, by modifying instructional practices in the early childhood years. (e-21-22) The summer months will be used to upgrade the skills of early learners by training and supporting caregivers and early childcare providers to provide assistance. There is variability in children's summer learning activities and time spent in those activities and supports will be provided to eliminate the need for remedial supports in the early grades.

Weaknesses:

The applicant has not addressed asset mapping.

Reader's Score: 2

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/05/2024 01:01 PM

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/05/2024 12:50 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Waterford Research Institute (S411C240154)
Reader #2:   **********

		Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Significance			
1. Significance		20	18
Quality of Project Design			
1. Project Design		30	29
Quality of Project Personnel			
1. Project Personnel		10	9
Quality of the Management Plan			
1. Management Plan		10	10
	Sub Total	70	66
Priority Questions			
Competitive Preference Priority			
Competitive Preference Priority 1			
1. Promoting Equity		3	3
Competitive Preference Priority 2			
1. Impact of COVID-19		3	2
	Sub Total	6	5
	Total	76	71

Technical Review Form

Reader #2: **************

Applicant: Waterford Research Institute (S411C240154)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factor:

Reader's Score: 18

> **Sub**

> 1. **(1) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies. (20 points)**

> **Strengths:**

> The proposed program is significant in that it offers rural schools a unique educational opportunity for some of the hardest to reach early learners in rural areas. For example, the proposal will expand early learning opportunities beyond traditional school-year offerings, including early education interventions during summers that utilize technology-based instruction. (e16) This program will address students who consistently have the most summer learning loss and the lowest achievement scores. The applicant clearly demonstrates promising evidence of the effectiveness of the program from current studies involving the most difficult early learning access barriers for rural, underserved populations. (e17-19)

> **Weaknesses:**

> The applicant does not sufficiently describe how the program will involve new strategies or alternates to existing strategies. For example, the proposed program does not address how the current project will be different than previous (i.e., modifications as a result of previous testing and analysis). The applicant states they will develop and define the current program but does not address how this will be done. (abstract and e14)

> **Reader's Score:** 18

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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

Reader's Score: 29

> **Sub**

1. **(1) The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework. (10 points)**

   Strengths:

   The applicant clearly demonstrates a conceptual framework for this summer program that will prepare pre-K students to enter school ready to learn. For example, the proposed program is an innovative blend of adaptive, personalized early learning software within a developmentally appropriate usage model supported by caregivers at home, or center-based educators, to drive kindergarten readiness outcomes. A proven Logic Model is provided to support the program activities. (e44) Students will use the program software 20 minutes a day, five days a week. All activities are aligned to early childhood development standards (i.e., state, Head Start, national standards for early learning and pre-K–2). (e22) The applicant will administer pre- and post-assessment. Assessments will provide real-time, personalized feedback for data-driven instructional decisions. (e23)

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses noted.

   Reader's Score: 10

2. **(2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable. (5 points)**

   Strengths:

   The applicant provides goals and objectives for the proposed program that are demonstrated to be clearly specified and measurable. For example, there are two goals: 1) to develop and refine the pilot program, and 2) to enhance student readiness for school. Objectives are defined by measures and outcomes/outputs. For example, outcomes will be determined by success measures including number of participants in the curriculum and in adult learning opportunities, caregiver and educator engagement, number of participants achieving gains and growth in math and literacy measures, percent growth in math and literacy gains, and other relevant measures. (e45-47)

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses noted.

   Reader's Score: 5

3. **(3) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs. (15 points)**

   Strengths:

   The applicant clearly demonstrates that the proposed program identifies and meets the needs of the targeted population (i.e., summer learning loss for early education due to qualified teacher workforce, transportation, and adequate facilities). For this project, the main target audience will be rural with a grade level focus on the summer before and after kindergarten. (e26) The strategies of the program are designed to overcome major barriers in rural areas (i.e., availability of services, teacher shortages, cost, transportation, performance fidelity, parental preferences, and local priorities). (e24) For example, the program can be implemented in different settings (at home or center-based). The program is designed to eliminate the need for additional space, staff, curriculum, or training.

Sub

> **Weaknesses:**
>
> The applicant does not sufficiently describe how the proposed program will meet the needs of high needs students who are identified as part of the population in the abstract.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the following factor:**

Reader's Score: 9

> **Sub**

> 1. **(1) The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. In addition, the Secretary considers the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel. (10 points)**
>
> > **Strengths:**
> >
> > The applicant demonstrates that there will be nine internal project personnel and supporting teams to provide expertise in program operations, reporting and project management, responsive community engagement, research, curriculum and instruction, and other relevant areas. Key personnel are demonstrated to have appropriate qualifications, relevant training and experience (i.e., bios, resumes). (e27)
> >
> > **Weaknesses:**
> >
> > The applicant does not demonstrate that the proposed program will represent a diversity of employees. There needs to be a plan (i.e., dissemination, selection criteria, interviews, other relevant components.

Reader's Score: 9

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources and quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 10

> **Sub**

> 1. **(1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.**

Sub

Strengths:

The applicant presents a detailed and cohesive management plan in Appendix E (e58-67). The plan takes in factors such as student needs, partnerships, the promotion of equity, project sustainability, and other factors that are relevant. The management plan includes goals, objectives, activities, responsibilities, data collection, and timelines. There is also a good plan for dissemination. The management plan clearly demonstrates that the project will operate on time and within budget. (e29-30, e58-67) The applicant states that the project plans to maximize existing resources. For example, the program will provide center-based staff and other educators, initial training, ongoing coaching and professional learning, and family engagement events. In addition, the program will provide the tools, data, and support the project needs to help every child succeed. (e19-20)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 1:**

   Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: Implementers and Partners (up to 3 points)

   Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate how the project will be implemented by or in partnership with one or more of the following entities:
   (a) Community colleges (as defined in the NIA)
   (b) Historically Black colleges and universities (as defined in the NIA)
   (c) Tribal Colleges and Universities (as defined in the NIA)
   (d) Minority-serving institutions (as defined in the NIA)

   Strengths:

   The applicant is in partnership with a Historically Black University and meets this Competitive Priority 1. The partner will designate faculty to support the project, playing a pivotal role in recruitment and enrollment by connecting with rural stakeholders, supporting outreach initiatives grounded in culturally responsive practices, and enhancing program effectiveness. (e20)

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 2:**

   Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Students, Educators, and Faculty: Community Asset-Mapping and Needs Assessment and Evidence-Based Instructional Approaches and Supports (up to 3 points).

Projects that are designed to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including impacts that extend beyond the duration of the pandemic itself, on the students most impacted by the pandemic, with a focus on underserved students and the educators who serve them through the following priority areas:

(a) Conducting community asset-mapping and needs assessments that may include an assessment of the extent to which students, including subgroups of students, have become disengaged from learning, including students not participating in in-person or remote instruction, and specific strategies for reengaging and supporting students and their families; and

(b) Using evidence-based instructional approaches and supports, such as professional development, coaching, ongoing support for educators, high-quality tutoring, expanded access to rigorous coursework and content across K-12, and expanded learning time to accelerate learning for students in ways that ensure all students have the opportunity to successfully meet challenging academic content standards without contributing to tracking or remedial courses.

Strengths:

The applicant addresses this Competitive Priority 2 (COVID 19) by offering expanded learning time in rural communities, with a special focus on supporting early learners during the critical summer months as they transition into kindergarten and first grade. The project leverages computer adaptive instruction for students and tailored coaching for caregivers and early childcare providers led by skilled educators, former teachers, and local community leaders. (e21, e14)

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not sufficiently address this criterion. For example, there is no mention of community asset-mapping and needs assessments that include an assessment of the extent to which students, including subgroups of students, have become disengaged from learning, including students not participating in in-person or remote instruction, and specific strategies for reengaging and supporting students and their families.

Reader's Score: 2

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/05/2024 12:50 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Waterford Research Institute (S411C240154)
Reader #3:   **********

		Points Possible	**Points Scored**
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Significance			
1. Significance		20	15
Quality of Project Design			
1. Project Design		30	27
Quality of Project Personnel			
1. Project Personnel		10	8
Quality of the Management Plan			
1. Management Plan		10	10
	Sub Total	70	60
Priority Questions			
Competitive Preference Priority			
Competitive Preference Priority 1			
1. Promoting Equity		3	3
Competitive Preference Priority 2			
1. Impact of COVID-19		3	2
	Sub Total	6	5
	Total	76	65

Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - Early Tier 1 - 7: 84.411C

Reader #3:   **********

Applicant: Waterford Research Institute (S411C240154)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factor:

Reader's Score: **15**

    Sub

    1. **(1) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies. (20 points)**

      Strengths:

      The applicants propose to build on a current K-1 grade level summer learning program in literacy and math to prepare students for school. It is a strength of the proposal that initial research on the model shows promise in limited settings (p. e17-19).

      Weaknesses:

      The application fails to adequately describe the Summer Learning Program that students have been and will be using. It is not clear that the technologies or service models utilized are particularly innovative or how they will be specifically designed for the target population that includes "families with low incomes, students that attend under-resourced schools, students with disabilities, dual language learners, students from underrepresented minority communities, or students from non-white minority groups" (p. e10).

      Reader's Score: **15**

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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

Reader's Score: **27**

    Sub

    1. **(1) The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework. (10 points)**

Sub

Strengths:

The conceptual framework clearly highlights general obstacles facing the provision of high-quality early childhood education in rural communities (p. e14).

The Logic Model (p. e44) provides a specific framework highlighting the project components, mediators, and outcomes that are foundational for the success of the program.

The conceptual framework outlines promising previous research on the Summer Learning Path program which serves as the foundation for this proposed project (p. e17+).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

2. **(2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable. (5 points)**

   Strengths:

   The proposal includes goals, objectives, and outcomes that are clearly specified and measurable. In particular, Appendices B (p. e113+) and E (p. 126+) provide ambitious yet attainable objectives and outcomes, including quarterly and annual timelines, measures, and personnel responsible.

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses noted.

   Reader's Score: 5

3. **(3) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs. (15 points)**

   Strengths:

   The application outlines challenges facing states in securing adequate funding in order to improve the educational outcomes for rural students (p. e14). It establishes that rural schools generally, particularly for young learners, are underfunded and sees this program as a way to mitigate the school readiness gap for rural and other potentially under-resourced or underprepared students.

   The applicants plan to partner with Jackson State University to recruit participants and make the program available in Mississippi (p. e20). It would seem that this partnership will help ensure that the program reaches the families who comprise the target population.

   Offering virtual literacy and math programs that can be accessed via a laptop/tablet and broadband (both of which the applicant will provide and outlined in the Budget, p. e249), allows students living in rural communities equitable access to school readiness resources, meeting the needs of many in the target population.

   Weaknesses:

   The application lacks discussion of the specific needs facing the students targeted by this proposal (rural and underserved students in Texas, Oklahoma, Kentucky, South Carolina, North Carolina, Missouri, Mississippi, and

New Hampshire).

It is not clear that the project curriculum will be designed specifically to meet the needs of all the students who comprise the target population (defined on p. e10). To meet the needs of the target population, it would be important for the program to make the software available in languages other than English, use accessible technologies and platforms for students with disabilities, and ensure that the curriculum is culturally responsive for all learners.

Partners' letters of support fail to list specific commitments beyond "partnering" with the applicant. Without specific commitments, it is difficult to understand how the applicant will utilize these partnerships to meet the specialized needs of the target communities.

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the following factor:**

Reader's Score: 8

Sub

1. **(1) The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. In addition, the Secretary considers the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.   (10 points)**

   Strengths:

   The applicant states that it aims for a workforce that represents the diversity of the communities it serves and actively seeks talent that represents diverse backgrounds, perspectives, experiences, and identities (p.e27). The inclusion of Historically Black College and University (HBCU) Jackson State University as a partner demonstrates that commitment.

   The qualifications of the key personnel are generally in alignment with the responsibilities each has in the proposed project.

   Weaknesses:

   While the applicant appears to be committed to the diversity of its workforce, the application lacks detail about how it will encourage applications from members of traditionally underrepresented groups for employment opportunities.

   Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources and quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 10

    Sub

1. **(1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.**

   Strengths:

   Appendix E (p. e162+) includes a detailed management plan that maps each goal and activity with the personnel responsible, the measures/data collection tool, and the timelines for accomplishment.

   The budget appears adequate for the applicant to accomplish the project tasks and includes funds for equipment and supplies (computers and broadband-p. e253) as well as evaluation and personnel.

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses noted.

    Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 1:**

   Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: Implementers and Partners (up to 3 points)

   Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate how the project will be implemented by or in partnership with one or more of the following entities:
   (a) Community colleges (as defined in the NIA)
   (b) Historically Black colleges and universities (as defined in the NIA)
   (c) Tribal Colleges and Universities (as defined in the NIA)
   (d) Minority-serving institutions (as defined in the NIA)

   Strengths:

   Jackson State University, an Historically Black University, is a partner in this project; a letter of support is included in the application.

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 2:**

   Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Students, Educators, and Faculty: Community Asset-Mapping and Needs Assessment and Evidence-Based Instructional Approaches and Supports (up to 3 points).

   Projects that are designed to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including impacts that extend beyond the duration of the pandemic itself, on the students most impacted by the pandemic, with a focus on underserved students and the educators who serve them through the following priority areas:

   (a) Conducting community asset-mapping and needs assessments that may include an assessment of the extent to which students, including subgroups of students, have become disengaged from learning, including students not participating in in-person or remote instruction, and specific strategies for reengaging and supporting students and their families; and

   (b) Using evidence-based instructional approaches and supports, such as professional development, coaching, ongoing support for educators, high-quality tutoring, expanded access to rigorous coursework and content across K-12, and expanded learning time to accelerate learning for students in ways that ensure all students have the opportunity to successfully meet challenging academic content standards without contributing to tracking or remedial courses.

   Strengths:

   The applicant provided a general needs assessment of rural communities that found a lack of investment in early childhood education and a need for expanded learning time due to impacts from COVID (p. e21). The project includes individual coaching for participant families and teachers at childcare centers and has a focus on community and family engagement (p. e24). It also includes evidence-based instructional approaches in the project design, including professional development and support, coaching, expanded learning time and readiness activities aligned to standards.

   Weaknesses:

   The applicant did not conduct asset-mapping for the communities it proposes to include as the target population.

   Reader's Score: 2

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/05/2024 06:53 PM

U.S. Department of Education - EDCAPS
G5-Technical Review Form (New)

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Waterford Research Institute (S411C240154)

Reader #1: **********

		Points Possible	**Points Scored**
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Quality of the Project Evaluation			
1. Project Evaluation		30	30
	Sub Total	30	30
	Total	30	30

Technical Review Form

Reader #1:   **********

Applicant: Waterford Research Institute (S411C240154)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 30

> **Sub**

1. **(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards with or without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice). (20 points)**

    Strengths:

    The applicant presents a comprehensive evaluation plan. As a strength, there is coherence in the evaluation plan. For example, the research questions (p. e31) as well as the logic model (p. e44) reflect the first project goal, which is to enhance student readiness for school (p. e25).

    The applicant provides an impact study of the project which uses a randomized controlled trial. This study, if well implemented, will likely meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservations (p. e32). The applicant presents evidence of its randomization process and indicates that the students who receive the math intervention will serve as the control group for the reading intervention (p. e32). The applicant appropriately raises the issue of treatment contamination due to use of similar software (p. e33).

    The applicant demonstrates that the evaluation plan is thorough. As evidence, Appendix F contains the research questions, baseline measures, outcome measures and analytic approach (p. e69). In addition, the applicant describes attrition and its effects on the project (p. e34). For example, baseline data will be collected using the Waterford Assessment of Core Skills, which will be used to establish baseline equivalence in the case of high attrition. As a strength, the applicant specifies how it will treat missing outcome data and describes plans for conducting a sensitivity analysis to show the impact of missing data (p. e35, 76). The applicant demonstrates the reliability and validity of the measures used in the study (p. e33). The applicant describes its power analysis as well as the estimated effect sizes, which are in line with the minimum detectable effect sizes (p. e36). The applicant provides the mathematical model used to measure the impact of the intervention (p. e35). Finally, as an additional strength, the applicant describes its comprehensive fidelity measurement framework with implementation thresholds (p. e77).

    Weaknesses:

    No weaknesses noted.

    Reader's Score: 20

2. **(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. (5 points)**

   Strengths:

   The applicant describes the management plan which contains several ways in which the project will solicit feedback. For example, there will be three opportunities to convene meetings of stakeholders to review findings and recommend improvements (p. e62). In addition, the applicant provides specific annual feedback from participants and partners on recruitment using surveys and interviews (p. e63). Furthermore, the applicant demonstrates that it will have a continuous feedback process. For example, there will be monitoring of the training attendance and the weekly usage of software (p. e27).

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses noted.

   Reader's Score: 5

3. **(3) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation. (5 points)**

   Strengths:

   The application clearly articulates the key project components, mediators and outcomes. The applicant provides a logic model which shows key components of the project, as well as mediators and outcomes (p. e44). For example, summer learning support is one of the key project components. The applicant details mediators which include an increase in adult self- efficacy related to engaging children in literacy and math. In addition, the applicant provides outcomes that include increases in literary skills and math achievement.   The applicant describes how it will conduct a mediator analysis (p. e31).

   As a strength, the applicant describes several of the research questions that concern fidelity of implementation. For example, two examine the challenges associated with the implementation (p. e31). The applicant also provides thresholds of implementation for the pilot study, such as a minimum participation rate of 70% for registered participants in the pilot study. As an additional strength, the applicant presents Appendix J, which has a thorough fidelity measurement framework with thresholds for several indicators and four levels of fidelity. For example, the fidelity of the duration of coaching provided ranges from zero to three, based on increasing increments of 25% participation for each level (p. e77).

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses noted.

   Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 10/03/2024 10:39 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Waterford Research Institute (S411C240154)
Reader #2: **********

		Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Quality of the Project Evaluation			
1. Project Evaluation		30	30
	Sub Total	30	30
	Total	30	30

Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - Early Tier 2 - 5: 84.411C

Reader #2:   **************

Applicant: Waterford Research Institute (S411C240154)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: **30**

> **Sub**

> 1. **(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards with or without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice). (20 points)**

> **Strengths:**

> This evaluation is likely to meet WWC 5.0 standards without reservations if implemented as designed. The applicants propose an RCT study to examine 1) whether students who engage with their summer reading curriculum show higher scores in phonics and alphabetics than students who engage with a summer math curriculum, and 2) whether students who engage with their summer math curriculum show higher scores in numbers and operations than students who engage with a summer reading curriculum.

> Students will be randomly assigned to participate in either the reading curriculum or the math curriculum by the evaluator after consents are collected. They will be randomly assigned at the individual level, blocking for cohort and the agency by which they were recruited. Since both groups are recruited to the sample with the prospect of receiving a summer intervention treatment, this reduces the risk of motivation bias in the sample.

> While there is a risk for contamination in this study with both groups receiving access to the Summer Learning Path intervention software, students will be given password-protected access to only the domain-specific curricula to which they are randomly assigned.

> In their description of possible attrition, the applicants assume that 83 percent of students will complete an assessment. This assumption is based on two other similar studies. They also assume there will be low differential attrition between their reading and math groups based on another study using a similar evaluation design (p. e34). In the case that there is differential attrition, the applicants will use additional student background characteristics as covariates in their analyses (p. e33), which meets the WWC standards for mitigating attrition bias.

> The Waterford Assessment of Core Skills (WACS; Waterford, 2018) will be used to assess students' baseline academic skills, and can be used to establish baseline equivalence in the event of high attrition. The WACS is valid and reliable, as is the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement-3rd Edition (KTEA-3; Kaufman & Kaufman, 2014), which will be used to assess students' reading and math skills at the end of the intervention (p. e34).

> The applicant's proposal for addressing missing data by using complete outcome case analyses with baseline data imputed using dummy variables meets WWC standards. The applicants will also examine a model using

nonresponse weights and examine sensitivity analyses using these different approaches (p. e35).

The applicants conducted power analyses to select their minimum detectable effect size (MDES). Their MDES is lower than their expected effect sizes for both reading and math (p. e36 and e144).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 20

2. **(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. (5 points)**

Strengths:

The applicants state that they will use a variety of data sources for continuous feedback on their programming, including data on recruitment, attendance, weekly usage, assessments, and feedback from parents, teachers, partners, and the field (p. e26-27). The applicants also propose to use fidelity of implementation scores to guide continuous improvement (p. e36-37).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. **(3) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation. (5 points)**

Strengths:

The key components of the project are articulated in the Logic Model (p. e44).

Mediators are articulated in the Logic Model (p. e44). Additionally, the applicants plan to conduct mediation analyses to examine the extent to which implementation fidelity contributes to students' reading and math outcomes (p. e31).

The project's outcomes are articulated in the Logic Model (p. e44).

Measurable thresholds for acceptable implementation are very clearly articulated in Appendix J (p. e77-79), with scores indicating low, medium, or high levels of implementation.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted

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