

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/10/2016 08:49 AM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Texans Can Academies (U374A160003)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	20	20
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	45	43
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Selection Criterion</b>		
<b>Professional Development Systems</b>		
1. Development Systems	15	15
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	15	14
<b>Adequacy of Resources</b>		
1. Adequacy of Resources	5	4
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority</b>		
<b>Supporting High-Need Students</b>		
1. CPP 1	2	0
<b>Improving Teacher Effectiveness</b>		
1. CPP 2	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>101</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #15 - Teacher Incentive Fund - 16: 84.374A

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

Applicant: Texans Can Academies (U374A160003)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Significance

1. We will consider the extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population.

#### General:

Strengths: The applicant is a network of eleven (soon to be thirteen) charter schools serving minority at-risk ninth and tenth grade students in the five largest cities in Texas since 1995 (abstract). Since its inception, the applicant has served over 145,000 low-income underrepresented minority students and their parents (p.3). The schools face challenges in increasing academic performance, graduation rates, college enrollment and college readiness. Test scores in core subjects demonstrate a significant underachievement when compared to the State. All schools are receiving Title I funding and the free and reduced lunch count is 90.2%. The proposal aligns with the State Plan to promote equitable access to ensure access to excellent educators for students from low-income families, minority students, English Learners, at-risk and students with disabilities (Appendix F22).

Weakness: None noted.

Reader's Score: 20

### Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, we will consider the following factors

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Reader's Score: 43

#### Sub Question

1. (1) The extent to which the proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students.

#### General:

Strengths: The project design is ambitious and comprehensive. As a recipient of numerous federal, state and private grants allowing for a sixty-million dollar annual budget, the proposal seeks to leverage lessons learned, experiences gained and local capacity to move forward. Grant funds will allow for integration to enhance and modify the applicant's current state evaluation, its Performance Based Compensation System (PBCS), Human Capital Management System (HCMS) design systems and its strategic plan of instructional improvement resulting in overall increased student achievement (p.9).

Weaknesses: None noted.

**Sub Question**

**Reader's Score:**

- 2. (2) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project involve the collaboration of appropriate partners for maximizing the effectiveness of project services.**

**General:**

Strengths: The Texas Education Agency and Education Service Center, the University of North Texas and A&M University are identified as collaborative partners (p.15). A supporting partner, a non-profit charity Cars for Kids, generates income for the initiative.

Weaknesses: Although the applicant states their charter schools have become a platform for quality education and community empowerment where underrepresented students, parent, teachers and administrators are engaged in leadership, academics, technologies, post-secondary readiness, enrichment and social programming, the proposal does not, contrary to its Logic Model, describe how parents are committed or empowered to improving the school community, or are informed and energized around efforts to improve education for local children (p.121). An impact of the Project Outcomes is described in the Logic Model as "full staff and community support for retained and rewarded highly effective leaders of learners." (p.121). No further discussion is found. The applicant states they will be in partnership with reputable higher education institutions, community-based organizations and private firms to provide year-round professional development to participating TIF staff (p.184). Outside of the higher learning institutions, the applicant did not identify or describe community-based partners or the private firms. A grant activity to support the goal is to create an Advisory Committee. However, to meet that goal, the current School Advisory Committee will be maintained. There is no discussion regarding committee members such as parents and the professional business community as well as others who have an interest in the education of their community children.

**Reader's Score:**

- 3. (3) The extent to which the proposed project is supported by a strong theory.**

**General:**

Strengths: The theoretical concept of the project builds on the current theory of Human Capital. The applicant discusses it as a critical element in each high-need school. Citations of research are found in the description.

Weaknesses: None noted.

**Reader's Score:**

- 4. (4) The extent to which the proposed project will integrate with or build on similar or related efforts to improve the relevant outcomes (as defined in 34 C.F.R. 77.1(c)), using existing funding streams from other programs or policies supported by community, State and Federal resources.**

**General:**

Strengths: The applicant details how the proposal integrates with related efforts using existing sources such as Title I funding, State of Texas 2014 Educator Excellence Innovation Program (EEIP) and 21st Century Community Learning Centers to improve educator effectiveness (p.19). Cars for Kids, a local non-profit charity giving 35% of its net income as well as numerous federal, state and private grants allow for high-quality administrative, programmatic, fiscal, management and evaluation control systems adding up to a sixty-million dollar annual budget (p. 30).

Weaknesses: None noted.

**Reader's Score:**

## Selection Criterion - Professional Development Systems

1. In determining the quality of the professional development systems to support the needs of teachers and principals identified through the evaluation process, we will consider the extent to which--

Reader's Score: 15

### Sub Question

1. (1) Each participating LEA has a high-quality plan for professional development to help all educators located in high-need schools, listed in response to Requirement 2(a), to improve their effectiveness.

#### General:

Strengths: The proposal clearly describes its ambitious professional development plan for new teachers, veteran teachers and experienced teachers (who will serve as master/mentor teachers) as well as principals, assistant principals and other administrators (p.21). A logic model providing a synopsis of the professional development plan is found on page 36. A comprehensive logic plan details Focus, Inputs, Activities, Outcomes and Impact (p. 121). It is clear that all professional development improvement and performance plans are tied to expectations of student growth (p. 173).

Weaknesses: No weakness noted.

Reader's Score:

2. (2) The plan describes how the participating LEA will use the disaggregated information generated by the proposed educator Evaluation and Support System to identify the professional development needs of individual Educators and schools.

#### General:

Strengths: The applicant details a job-embedded learning-centered conceptual framework supporting individual professional growth and incentive plans (IPGIP) (p. 21). Program alignment with VAL-ED and the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education are shown in two charts illustrating the framework, components and processes which anchor disaggregated data generated to identify and provide individual professional needs.

Weaknesses: None noted.

Reader's Score:

## Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

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.

#### General:

Strengths: The applicant discusses its extensive management experience and its design to keep all proposed objectives and outcomes on time and within budget. The plan includes integrating the current advisory council (TAC) into the Proposal as it is a vital element of the program's continuous improvement and feedback component (p. 31).

Weaknesses: References made to feedback and data review for program improvement is unclear as to whether any of this information is to be shared with the community (p. 34). The Project will have a Principal Investigator who is

experienced in management of State and Federal educational programs and is currently a local Superintendent (p. 31; 122). However, even with an already hired full-time Project Director, it is questionable whether a .10 FTE allows enough time for the position (32).

**Reader's Score: 14**

### **Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources**

- 1. In determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project, we will consider the extent to which--**

**Reader's Score: 4**

#### **Sub Question**

- 1. (1) The applicant demonstrates that Performance-based Compensation Systems are developed with the input of teachers and schools in the schools and local educational agencies to be served by the grant.**

#### **General:**

Strengths: The applicant states the application process was a collaborative effort in which substantial input from each school was considered and which "buy-in" from all critical personnel was obtained. Feedback was solicited on program design, activities and outcomes through focus groups and four working sessions with administrators, teachers and educators (p. 39).

Weaknesses: None noted.

**Reader's Score:**

- 2. (2) The applicant demonstrates a plan to sustain financially the activities conducted and systems developed under the grant once the grant period has expired.**

#### **General:**

Strengths: To show its commitment to sustaining the Project, the applicant will continue to allocate, during or after TIF funding, over 35% of net profit from its successful long-standing partnership with Cars for Kids, a charitable effort supporting the schools. District and campus administrators will provide on-going support at no cost (p. 40). The applicant states they and partnering schools have identified State, local and private matching funds that will be leveraged to support the goals and objectives for the duration and sustainability of the project (p.41).

Weaknesses: The applicant does not identify the above sources of funding.

**Reader's Score:**

### **Priority Questions**

#### **Competitive Preference Priority - Supporting High-Need Students**

- 1. (1) Projects that are designed to improve academic outcomes for students served by Rural Local Educational Agencies.**

**General:**

The applicant was not awarded points under Competitive Preference Priority 1 because it is not seeking eligibility under this priority.

**Reader's Score: 0**

**Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Teacher Effectiveness**

- 1. We will consider projects that are designed to address promoting equitable access to effective teachers for students from low-income families and minority students across and within schools and districts.**

**To meet this priority, teacher effectiveness must be measured using an Evaluation and Support System. We are particularly interested in applications that address the following invitational priority:**

**Invitational Priority-Promoting Equitable Access Through State Plans To Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators: Applications that include a description of how the applicant's project promotes equitable access to effective Educators for students from low-income families and for minority students across and within districts, consistent with approved State Plans to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educator.**

**General:**

The Project Goal is to create a 9th-12th grade pipeline of highly effective teachers, leaders and educators to increase all students' academic achievement, graduation and post-secondary outcomes. Objectives are to increase all students academic achievement through creating highly effective teachers and educators and establish an effective HCMS and PBCS at each target school to ensure highly effective educators are apparent and retained (p.1). A detailed State Equity Plan Summary is enclosed and describes State action, Root causes and strategies (p. 219).

**Reader's Score: 5**

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**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 08/10/2016 08:49 AM

Status: Submitted

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## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Texans Can Academies (U374A160003)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	20	20
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	45	44
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Selection Criterion</b>		
<b>Professional Development Systems</b>		
1. Development Systems	15	15
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	15	15
<b>Adequacy of Resources</b>		
1. Adequacy of Resources	5	4
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority</b>		
<b>Supporting High-Need Students</b>		
1. CPP 1	2	0
<b>Improving Teacher Effectiveness</b>		
1. CPP 2	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>103</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #15 - Teacher Incentive Fund - 16: 84.374A

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

Applicant: Texans Can Academies (U374A160003)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Significance

1. We will consider the extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population.

#### General:

##### Strengths:

The proposed project will clearly and effectively build the target areas' capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the significant needs of the target population. The applicant will serve a LEA of eleven (thirteen by 2017) charter schools (grades 9-12) with low academic achievement, poverty, high dropout rates and violence. For example, the state mandated tests demonstrate that a significantly low percentage of only 57% (as compared to 77% for state) are scoring average on core subjects. In addition, 90.2% are eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch. (pages e19-e20) The program has already been awarded a state demonstration grant and developed a successful Human Capital Management System to systematically increase educators' skills. (page e 18) The 2016 TIF funding will serve to build on the lessons learned from the state grant with enhanced recruitment, hiring, placement, retention, compensation, professional development, tenure and promotion. (page e19) Activities to meet the program's goals and objectives include: hiring quality staff, appointing Master/Mentor Teachers to coach less experienced teachers, offering incentive awards and salary increases for highly-effective performance, proposing bonuses, recruitment and retention payments to retain and attract quality educators and professional development opportunities, and systems that support educators in high quality learning and teaching to ensure student success. (page e25) Overall the goal is to provide effective teaching for all students. This will be accomplished with strategies such as enhancing HCMS and PBCS systems; providing effective, mentoring, coaching, retention and evaluation practices for educators; effective recognition and rewards for educators; providing effective recruitment, hiring and induction practices; and increasing effective professional development. (page e26)

Weaknesses: No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 20

### Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, we will consider the following factors

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Reader's Score: 44

#### Sub Question

1. (1) The extent to which the proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students.

## Sub Question

### General:

Strengths: The comprehensive proposed project has been designed to utilize effective HCMS/PBCS strategies. The LEA's HCMS/PBCS are already successfully established and on track due to a state grant (that focuses on differentiated compensation for teacher performance and effectiveness based on student performance). As a result of this funding and planning, the TIF program will use proven and enhanced strategies to address 1) Recruiting and Hiring; 2) Induction; 3) Coaching and Mentoring; 4) Career Pathways; 5) Value-added system; 6) Differentiated Compensation; and 7) Retention. (page e27) All of these strategies will promote highly-effective educators and student academic achievement.

Weaknesses: No weaknesses noted.

### Reader's Score:

#### 2. (2) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project involve the collaboration of appropriate partners for maximizing the effectiveness of project services.

### General:

Strengths: Due to a previous state grant designed to improve educator effectiveness, the applicant has established strong collaborations with the state Department of Education (including Education Service Centers) and two institutions of higher education. These partnerships have been instrumental in shaping the HCMS/PBCS along with the input of teachers and school leaders from all target schools. In addition, the program has established Internal Collaborative Partnerships such as Campus Leadership Teams to provide input for specific issues. (page e32) As a result of relevant partnerships from the state grant, this project is in a good position to maximize the TIF funding in a timely manner.

Weaknesses: The applicant does not provide information about who serves on advisory committees. For example, there is no firm evidence demonstrating the participation of mentioned community or parental participation. (logic model)

### Reader's Score:

#### 3. (3) The extent to which the proposed project is supported by a strong theory.

### General:

Strengths: The proposed project is effectively built on current theory of Human Capital. This theory states that the education and training undertaken by workers and widespread investment in human capital will optimally create the desired skill-base and work-force. (page e33) The applicant provides much research demonstrating teachers and educators will be seen as a critical investment in human capital that impact increased academic performance and college readiness outcomes of all students. (page e34)

Weaknesses: No weaknesses noted.

### Reader's Score:

#### 4. (4) The extent to which the proposed project will integrate with or build on similar or related efforts to improve the relevant outcomes (as defined in 34 C.F.R. 77.1(c)), using existing funding streams from other programs or policies supported by community, State and Federal resources.

### General:

Strengths: This proposed program is well-fitted to the TIF program because it is the result of a successfully state-funded program to improve educator effectiveness in public schools through funding innovative practices that focus on differentiated compensation for teacher performance and effectiveness based on student performance. (page e36) In addition, the target schools are charter schools developed to serve the needs of traditionally extremely

**Sub Question**

underserved youth. The program has additional funding sources to continue generating revenue (i.e., Cars for Kids). (pages e36-e37)

Weaknesses: No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:**

**Selection Criterion - Professional Development Systems**

- 1. In determining the quality of the professional development systems to support the needs of teachers and principals identified through the evaluation process, we will consider the extent to which--**

**Reader's Score: 15**

**Sub Question**

- 1. (1) Each participating LEA has a high-quality plan for professional development to help all educators located in high-need schools, listed in response to Requirement 2(a), to improve their effectiveness.**

**General:**

Strengths: The applicant provides a comprehensive professional development plan designed for all educators (i.e., teachers, administrators and other staff). The program is multi-faceted and includes year round activities. All educators will be required to engage in 40 hours of targeted professional development training. Strategies include job-embedded coaching; a support system (i.e., mentoring and master teachers); educator development; Professional Development Communities; and use of evaluation and disaggregated data. It also includes an "Individual Professional Growth and Incentive Plan" that includes general expectations, specific learning and career goals and activities to address each individual's growth needs in such areas as certification, instruction, communications, management, and planning. (page e37) The program will also incorporate effective common planning time (90 minutes a week). (page e40)

Weaknesses: No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:**

- 2. (2) The plan describes how the participating LEA will use the disaggregated information generated by the proposed educator Evaluation and Support System to identify the professional development needs of individual Educators and schools.**

**General:**

Strengths: The proposed educator Evaluation and Support System will clearly generate disaggregated information identifying professional development needs. A secured web-based data management system will be used. This information will be accessed and utilized to identify and drive professional development needs of individual educators and schools. The evaluation processes will include: an external evaluation, formative and summative processes, instructional improvement, as well as teacher and principal and educator appraisal systems. (page e44) The Project Director and an experienced external evaluator will review evaluation (formative and summative) data quarterly. They will provide recommendations, based on findings, for professional development improvement. (page e43)

Weaknesses: No weaknesses noted.

**Sub Question**

**Reader's Score:**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan**

- 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.**

**General:**

Strengths: The applicant provides a comprehensive management plan that effectively utilizes established organizational and operational structures. As the lead and fiscal agent, the applicant demonstrates they have administrative, programmatic, fiscal, management and evaluation control systems. For example, the program uses the latest organizational managing software (i.e., GrantsMaximizer). (page e47) Responsibilities are clearly outlined for all staff and an advisory council will assist with planning, implementation, guidance, monitoring and feedback in program operations for continuous improvement. A timeline with milestones is provided for accomplishing project tasks. (pages e50-e52)

Weaknesses: No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 15**

**Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources**

- 1. In determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project, we will consider the extent to which--**

**Reader's Score: 4**

**Sub Question**

- 1. (1) The applicant demonstrates that Performance-based Compensation Systems are developed with the input of teachers and schools in the schools and local educational agencies to be served by the grant.**

**General:**

Strengths: The applicant hosted various focus groups and working sessions (four times) with administrators, teachers, and educators. Feedback was solicited on the program design, activities and outcomes, as well as the timeline and budget. (page e56) The applicant clearly demonstrates that over 97% of educators support the program. (page e57) Each targeted school had the opportunity to help design the service delivery model that would most effectively benefit their educators and students. A digital survey was developed to assess the level of teachers, administrators, and educators support and "buy-in". (page e57)

Weaknesses: No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:**

- 2. (2) The applicant demonstrates a plan to sustain financially the activities conducted and systems developed under the grant once the grant period has expired.**

**Sub Question**

**General:**

Strengths: The applicant states that there is a plan to sustain the TIF program following funding. For example, there will be support from programs such as "Cars for Kids" and administrators who will provide ongoing support at no cost. (page e57-e58)

Weaknesses: The applicant does not provide sufficient information about how the program will be sustained at the proposed level. For example, the state grant will only be in existence for two more years.

**Reader's Score:**

**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Preference Priority - Supporting High-Need Students**

- 1. (1) Projects that are designed to improve academic outcomes for students served by Rural Local Educational Agencies.**

**General:**

NA

**Reader's Score: 0**

**Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Teacher Effectiveness**

- 1. We will consider projects that are designed to address promoting equitable access to effective teachers for students from low-income families and minority students across and within schools and districts.**

**To meet this priority, teacher effectiveness must be measured using an Evaluation and Support System. We are particularly interested in applications that address the following invitational priority:**

**Invitational Priority-Promoting Equitable Access Through State Plans To Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators: Applications that include a description of how the applicant's project promotes equitable access to effective Educators for students from low-income families and for minority students across and within districts, consistent with approved State Plans to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educator.**

**General:**

Strengths: The proposed program addresses Competitive Priority 2 and the Invitational Priority and will meet the needs and the intent of TIF in 13 high-need charter schools in the five largest cities across the state. These schools are classified as a Local Education Agency (LEA) and receive Title I funding. The target population is high-need, at-risk and underserved youth and includes a high percentage of Hispanic, African-American, limited English proficient, low-income, and some of the most undereducated students in the state. (page e20) For example, 3,941 out of 4,158 students are categorized as low-income and 90.2% are in the Free and Reduced Lunch program. This equity plan was developed around a statewide equity gap regarding inexperienced teachers. This plan will address that gap by hiring, preparing and training effective new teachers with a skillset and the will to educate children from low-income families and minority students. In addition, the applicant will: improve the effectiveness of current teachers with appropriate professional development, remove ineffective teachers; and provide incentives for student performance. (page e97)

Weaknesses: No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:** 5

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**Status:** Submitted

**Last Updated:** 08/10/2016 08:29 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/09/2016 12:49 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Texans Can Academies (U374A160003)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	20	20
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	45	42
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Selection Criterion</b>		
<b>Professional Development Systems</b>		
1. Development Systems	15	15
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	15	15
<b>Adequacy of Resources</b>		
1. Adequacy of Resources	5	4
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority</b>		
<b>Supporting High-Need Students</b>		
1. CPP 1	2	0
<b>Improving Teacher Effectiveness</b>		
1. CPP 2	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>101</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #15 - Teacher Incentive Fund - 16: 84.374A

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

Applicant: Texans Can Academies (U374A160003)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Significance

1. We will consider the extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population.

#### General:

#### Strengths:

Based on a statewide, agreed-upon need for higher student performance, teacher improvement and highly-effective-teacher sustainability, the applicant, Texans Can (TC), has clearly stated and supported its mission to build-upon an established, yet under-developed HCMS and PBCS system (Project Ready-2ExCel, PR2-ExCel), in each of Texans Can's 13 schools (a charter school chain), throughout 5 major cities in Texas. Included in the proposal is an itemized list of highly ambitious activities aimed at meeting this goal (pg e15). These activities, if well-managed and followed with fidelity, will build system-wide competence in order to meet the needs of the targeted population.

Weaknesses: No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 20

### Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, we will consider the following factors

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Reader's Score: 42

#### Sub Question

1. (1) The extent to which the proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students.

#### General:

#### Strengths:

The applicant has formulated a well-rounded project design, aimed at achieving high levels of student performance, featuring various laudable traits: a collaborative campus culture, a high-intensity, all-inclusive professional development framework, an innovative evaluation system (TalentEd Perform, Appendix F13, pg e103), and teacher/leader upward mobility and overall satisfaction (pg e26-e31).

#### Weaknesses:

As evaluation is deemed the central component to any successful professional development plan, the "Educator Performance" observational rubric included in the proposal (Appendix F12) lacks a "holistic" realm of variables for identifying lesson strengths and weaknesses. The TalentEd Perform system IS customizable; however, there is no

### Sub Question

supplementary evidence, which indicates that the system is credible, user friendly, or tailored to fit the population being served. They did not provide a sample rubric depicting a holistic, well-researched set of evaluating points, to compliment the above mentioned "Educator Performance" rubric.

### Reader's Score:

2. **(2) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project involve the collaboration of appropriate partners for maximizing the effectiveness of project services.**

#### General:

##### Strengths:

There is, in the Logic Model (Appendix 13), a list of partnerships comprised of: internal collaborative teams, community based organizations, private firms and two Institutions of Higher Education (IHE). It is stated that the IHEs will provide technical assistance, a resource for recruitment, and high-level professional development.

##### Weaknesses:

The specified roles in the areas of community based partners and private firms are somewhat lacking (pg e31-33). Without detailed account of these roles, there is not sufficient evidence in the area of partnership impact.

### Reader's Score:

3. **(3) The extent to which the proposed project is supported by a strong theory.**

#### General:

##### Strengths:

Based on evidenced theories centered on human capital, the applicant refers to the correlation between the retention of highly qualified, highly incentivized teachers and high student achievement. It is found that teachers tend to leave the low-performance schools, for higher wages at higher-performance schools (pg e34). This theory, alone, demonstrates a strong need for teacher/leader incentive and human capital leadership for these high-need schools.

Weaknesses: No weaknesses noted

### Reader's Score:

4. **(4) The extent to which the proposed project will integrate with or build on similar or related efforts to improve the relevant outcomes (as defined in 34 C.F.R. 77.1(c)), using existing funding streams from other programs or policies supported by community, State and Federal resources.**

#### General:

##### Strengths:

Texans Can's PR2Excel project originated in 2014, after having received funds from a previous 4-year grant, from the Texas Education Agency. Additional significant funds have been raised from the 'Cars for Kids' fundraising efforts, as well.

##### Weaknesses:

By stating that there were "lessons [to be] learned" from PR2Excel's first two years of efforts (pg e19), without any specifics on what has/has not been successful, it is implied that there may have been some shortcomings in the development and sustainability of the project, thus far. Knowledge of these indicators is crucial to the success of efforts to build upon this foundation.

Based on lack of presented substantial victories from previously awarded grant funding (other than a slight increase in the percentage of retained, high-performing teachers), it is unclear whether or not this applicant is fully prepared to satisfy the objectives of this project.

### Reader's Score:

## Selection Criterion - Professional Development Systems

1. In determining the quality of the professional development systems to support the needs of teachers and principals identified through the evaluation process, we will consider the extent to which--

Reader's Score: 15

### Sub Question

1. (1) Each participating LEA has a high-quality plan for professional development to help all educators located in high-need schools, listed in response to Requirement 2(a), to improve their effectiveness.

#### General:

##### Strengths:

The applicant delineates a commanding 40-hour-per-year professional development plan, carried out through: Professional Learning Communities, mentoring programs, summer institutes, and Individual Professional Growth and Incentive Plans (IPGIPs), based on disaggregated evaluation data (pg e37-46). This indicates a strong commitment to motivating and meeting the needs of hard-working teachers/leaders in high need schools.

Weaknesses: No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score:

2. (2) The plan describes how the participating LEA will use the disaggregated information generated by the proposed educator Evaluation and Support System to identify the professional development needs of individual Educators and schools.

#### General:

##### Strengths:

A complementary list outlining the areas of professional development (PD) and their descriptions (See Appendix F16) incorporates a wide array of subject matter, ready to meet the various needs depicted in evaluative feedback. Contrary to the evaluation system addressed in the design portion of the application, the "Evaluation System" described in this PD section of the application does include a very holistic set of evaluative processes: external evaluation, formative/summative, instructional improvement, teacher, principal, and educator appraisal (pg e43)—making the above mentioned PD plan more realistic and attainable.

Weaknesses: No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score:

## Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

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.

#### General:

##### Strengths:

The applicant has ensured a highly qualified team of advisors to manage various aspects of the project. These advisory groups will meet regularly, both internally and across the board, to monitor time management, teacher/leader feedback, financial stability and evaluation and refinement needs (pg e48-50). Married with the timeline of actions and achievements (pg e50-55), this is a high-quality, well-rounded management plan, directed to meet the goals of the TIF grant.

Weaknesses: No weaknesses noted

**Reader's Score: 15**

### **Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources**

- 1. In determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project, we will consider the extent to which--**

**Reader's Score: 4**

#### **Sub Question**

- 1. (1) The applicant demonstrates that Performance-based Compensation Systems are developed with the input of teachers and schools in the schools and local educational agencies to be served by the grant.**

#### **General:**

##### **Strengths:**

Receiving a 97% "buy-in" from teachers, across all 11 Texans Can schools (with varying needs, climates and capacities) (pg e56), Texans Can has proven that all stakeholders involved are aware of the program. This, in combination with the teachers/leaders participation in various PR2ExCel committees involved in project management, is adequate evidence that teachers/leaders are playing an impactful role in the success of the project.

Weaknesses: No weaknesses noted

**Reader's Score:**

- 2. (2) The applicant demonstrates a plan to sustain financially the activities conducted and systems developed under the grant once the grant period has expired.**

#### **General:**

##### **Strengths:**

Texans Can has received a 97% educator buy-in and has built a strong management base. Financially, they have vowed to dedicate 35% of all future 'Cars for Kids' substantial earnings (pg e57), throughout the duration and after the grant period is over. The 21st Century After-School Program is also included as a financial resource.

##### **Weaknesses:**

There is no evidence that this 21st Century After-School Program funding goes toward the mission of the proposal. To that end, there is not sufficient support indicating full financial sustainability of the program.

**Reader's Score:**

### **Priority Questions**

#### **Competitive Preference Priority - Supporting High-Need Students**

- 1. (1) Projects that are designed to improve academic outcomes for students served by Rural Local Educational Agencies.**

**General:**

N/A

**Reader's Score: 0**

**Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Teacher Effectiveness**

- 1. We will consider projects that are designed to address promoting equitable access to effective teachers for students from low-income families and minority students across and within schools and districts.**

**To meet this priority, teacher effectiveness must be measured using an Evaluation and Support System. We are particularly interested in applications that address the following invitational priority:**

**Invitational Priority-Promoting Equitable Access Through State Plans To Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators: Applications that include a description of how the applicant's project promotes equitable access to effective Educators for students from low-income families and for minority students across and within districts, consistent with approved State Plans to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educator.**

**General:**

**Strengths:**

The population being targeted is comprised of high-need, at-risk and underserved youth, including a high percentage of Hispanic, African-American, low-income and limited-English proficient youth. Of this population (4,158 served at 11 Texans Can schools), 90.2% are eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch (Appendix 5). Nine of the schools did not meet AYP for two consecutive years (2011-2013). The proposal indicates and fully supports the intention to build upon and enhance current HCMS and PCBS systems—through a highly-scrutinized, integrated evaluation and professional development system—with intent to further develop and incentivize its teacher/leader staff in the interest of reaching the above mentioned targeted population.

**Weaknesses:** No weaknesses noted

**Reader's Score: 5**

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