

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/04/2023 04:31 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** NEBRASKA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY (S422B230010)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	20	20
<b>Need for Project</b>		
1. Need	25	25
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	25	25
<b>Adequacy of Resources</b>		
1. Adequacy of Resources	30	30
<b>Sub Total</b>	100	100
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
<b>Innovative Activities for Civic Engagement</b>		
1. Civic Engagement	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	5	5
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
<b>Student Access to Resources and Opportunities</b>		
1. Promoting Equity	7	3
<b>Sub Total</b>	7	3
<b>Total</b>	112	108

# Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - AHC-NA - 4: 84.422B

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

Applicant: NEBRASKA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY (S422B230010)

## Questions

### 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:
  - (i) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale. (10 points)
  - (ii) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition. (10 points)

#### Strengths:

The applicant's proposed project is distinctly based on the important premise of improving the persistence and success of students of color in secondary social studies honors courses which aligns with the grant Program's purpose and is critical to meet the needs of the target population (page e13-e15).

The project objectives and activities are clearly aligned to the overarching goal. This alignment and symmetry will allow for achievement of desired short and long-term outcomes and will support the Program's purpose of increasing innovation in instruction for underserved populations and professional development for teachers (page e13-e15).

The applicant's rationale for implementing the proposed project is clear, detailed and supported by a logic model (pages e69-e72), which explicitly defines goals and objectives and identifies indicators of success in the short and long term. This will serve as a clear roadmap and ensure that necessary strategic process are followed to ensure success and achievement of intended outcomes.

Moreover, the logic model aptly identifies external factors that might impact achievement of project objectives (such as structural barriers, i.e., socioeconomic factors, etc., page e72) which is very important. Recognizing these type factors during the project planning phase can significantly improve responsiveness to issues so that adjustments can be made to minimize or account for the factors' effects.

Based on the activities to be conducted, there is a high likelihood that the project will achieve the proposed impacts and intended effects. For instance, the proposed annual AP Exam Review sessions for students coupled with covering the cost of the exams for all students will ensure equitable access to educational resources and opportunities (page e16 – e17).

The applicant's proposed project design represents an exceptional approach in that the focus is on both teachers and students with specific supports embedded within the project for both groups (pages e19 – e30). This ensures that the needs of each group within the target population are met. Specifically, the incorporation of evidenced- based practices will ensure that the quality of teaching is improved (for example, via the 18 hours of targeted, hands-on instruction and application for teachers, page e30 –e34) and student achievement and persistence in AP History courses (via skilled teachers, exam prep and test fee provision, pages e15 – e19) is supported and improved as well.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 20**

**Selection Criteria - Need for Project**

1. **The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project. In determining the need for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**
  - i. **The magnitude or severity of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project. (8 points)**
  - ii. **The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses. (7 points)**
  - iii. **The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project are focused on those with greatest needs. (10 points)**

**Strengths:**

The applicant presented compelling evidence that clearly demonstrates the serious system of inequity and disparity between racial identity groups in the partner LEA regarding enrollment in honors courses and courses for college credit (page e35), thereby validating the needs to be addressed by the proposed project and justifying the inclusion of specific supports. For instance, the AP Exam Prep Sessions” accessible to students is an important way to meet needs (page e17).

In addition, based on the information provided, significant academic issues exist that impact overall student success which further substantiates the gap in services and the need for the project (pages e15; e38 – e39).

Using supporting data, the applicant clearly articulated the immediate need for intervention that is required in both teacher professional development as well as in student support. Specifically, the project will employ appropriate, research –based and evidence backed methods which will positively impact the current state with regard to available paths to earning college credit for underrepresented groups (pages e38 – 39). In addition, backed by evidence, it is likely that teacher development will be enhanced which in turn may positively impact student learning.

The proposed project will aptly support and enhance the partner district’s implementation of several initiatives including the “Equity Goals of the Lincoln Board of Education” (page e38). In addition, history courses will align with the C3 Framework and focus on enabling guided inquiry processes in teaching these subjects – a critical thinking skill students need for success (page e20). This type of alignment ensures that all program supports for students and teachers are relevant, timely and conducive to meeting grant goals.

Coupled with the noteworthy potential to impact 160 teachers and subsequently 40,000 students, the planned activities mentioned above succinctly demonstrate that the proposed project is focused on the identified needs of the district.

Moreover, the proposed project will build on the LEA’s existing theme of media literacy by providing professional development for teachers in applying media literacy practice in secondary social studies courses and measuring student improvement with district common assessments. In addition to equipping teachers with tools to encourage greater literacy and critical thinking skills, information related to the efficacy of media literacy training can be used to further validate its use with diverse students (page e60 –e61).

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 25**

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

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

- i. 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. (13 points)**
- ii. The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project. (12 points)**

**Strengths:**

(a)

The applicant clearly identifies which entity is responsible for the various components of the project, when tasks should occur and the milestones for each which indicates careful planning and clearly underscores the applicant's ability to manage a project of this magnitude. For instance, regarding the professional development component of the project, all graduate courses will be designed in partnership between the IHE faculty, (specifically project director and professor of History) and the LEA's Social Studies Curriculum Team (page e40). Having content specialists is integral to ensuring that any materials produced or content taught is relevant, accurate and timely to meet the professional development needs of teachers and the academic needs of students.

Involving each stakeholder and partner in the management of the project will be useful in ensuring that tasks are carried out in an efficient manner and completed on time and within budget (page e44 – e48).

Project partners have experience in working together on previous successful federal grant funded initiatives which underscores the management abilities of the key project team (page e40).

In addition, the applicant's plan to foster continuous improvement for the project (via creation of an Equity Advisory Council) includes building a structure to receive feedback annually from students through Lincoln Public School's Equity Scholars Cadre (page e52). This activity is likely to enhance communication among stakeholders and partners, which will be critical to success.

Moreover, the planned analysis of evaluation data will be essential for continuous monitoring and adjustment purposes during this grant, and constitutes a viable way to document the impact of grant activities (page e48- e52). Doing so will ensure that timely adjustments and programmatic changes are made that will ensure intended impacts and results can be achieved.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 25**

## Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

1. The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the adequacy of resources, the Secretary considers the following factors:
  - i. The adequacy of support, including facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources, from the applicant organization or the lead applicant organization. (6 points)
  - ii. The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project. (8 points)
  - iii. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant, including a multiyear financial and operating model and accompanying plan; the demonstrated commitment of any partners; evidence of broad support from stakeholders (e.g., SEAs, LEAs, teachers' unions) critical to the project's long-term success; or more than one of these types of evidence. (8 points)
  - iv. The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project. (8 points)

### Strengths:

The applicant includes sufficient evidence of ample resources and finances to support and implement the project (see letter of commitment in Appendix E) e52. Specifically, the applicant IHE is committed to the provision of in-kind contributions, such as the use of all necessary facilities and classrooms as needed for courses, training and professional development offerings. This type of commitment will be essential to the successful achievement of project objectives.

In addition, project costs are reasonable in relation to the number of participants to be served. For instance, the grant budget supports faculty to teach summer courses, which are considered outside of his academic year contract (page e53). Over the duration of the grant period, 60 secondary social studies teachers will become prepared to teach honors social studies, thus impacting thousands of students. This is a considerable impact and planned costs are reasonable in relation to said impact.

The applicant has embedded mechanisms within the design to ensure the sustainability of project gains. For instance, curricular materials and evidence gathered from the project will continue to be used (beyond grant funding) to inform professional development activities as well as other curriculum projects, thus ensuring the continuance of successful grant activities (page e55).

To demonstrate and underscore the commitment of partners, within the narrative (page e40) and within detailed MOAs/Letters of agreement which are included in appendices, the applicant outlines each partner's specific level of support to the project. For instance, the LEA partner will supply two persons to serve on the management team (K-12 Social Studies Curriculum Specialist and K-12 Teacher Leader for Social Studies) Taken together, the plans to leverage existing available resources within the university setting, the commitment of partners and the plans for integration and sustainability, demonstrate clearly the provision of more than adequate support for the project which increases the likelihood of project success.

### Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:** 30

### Priority Questions

## **Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Innovative Activities for Civic Engagement**

### **1. Competitive Preference Priority 1: Innovative Activities for Civic Engagement (up to 5 points)**

Under this priority, we provide funding to promote new and existing evidence-based strategies to encourage innovative civics and government learning strategies and professional development activities and programs for teachers, principals, or other school leaders, particularly such instruction, strategies, activities, and programs that benefit low income students and underserved populations. To meet this priority, a project must include one or both of the following-- a) Hands-on civic engagement activities for teachers and students; or b) Programs that educate students about the history and principles of the Constitution of the United States, including the Bill of Rights.

#### **Strengths:**

The applicant proposes an innovative method of addressing the issue of knowledge decay (relative to the US Constitution) that students experience between 9th grade civics and 12th grade Government and politics (page e57).

Equipping teachers with the tools to effectively bridge the gap between the courses by vertically associating specific themes across other courses to help reactivate information for students is a strategic way to meet academic needs (page e57 – e58).

#### **Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:**      5

## **Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Student Access to Resources and Opportunities**

### **1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities (up to 7 points)**

Under this priority, and applicant must demonstrate that the applicant proposes a project designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students—

a) in one or more of the following educational settings: (1) Early learning programs (2) Elementary school (3) Middle school (4) High school (5) Career and technical education programs (6) Out-of-schooltime settings (7) Alternative schools and programs (8) Juvenile justice system or correctional facilities

b) That examines the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, and that may include one or both of the following:

c) Rigorous, engaging, and well-rounded (e.g., that include music and the arts) approaches to learning that are inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status and prepare students for college, career, and civic life, including civics programs that support students in understanding and engaging in American democratic practices (up to 3 points).

d) Establishing, expanding, or improving the engagement of underserved community members (including underserved students and families) in informing and making decisions that influence policy and practice at the school, district, or State level by elevating their voices, through their participation and their perspectives and providing them with access to opportunities for leadership (e.g., establishing partnerships between civic student government programs and parent and caregiver leadership initiatives) (up to 4 points).

**Strengths:**

The applicant has clearly examined the target area and determined that disparity in enrollment in honors courses between racial identity groups in Lincoln Public Schools is a significant problem that requires immediate intervention.

The proposed project will mediate the issues, and effectively address the disparities that exist with regard to underserved populations' enrollment and persistence in honors social studies courses via targeted professional development for teachers (e.g., coursework and awarding of micro-credentials, pages e28 – e34) and media literacy skills supports for students (page e48).

In addition, the project removes barriers to equity in honors secondary courses by providing students access to review sessions prior to Advanced Placement (AP) exams and covering the cost of those exams.

Moreover, participating high school teachers can earn credentials to offer dual enrollment as an alternative to AP thereby creating another avenue to meet the academic/pre-college credit needs of the target population (page e59-e60).

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not include sufficient details related to the inclusion of activities to improve, establish or enhance engagement of community members and therefore no points are awarded for this component of the Competitive Preference Priority. Including activities that would support participation of community members in the civic process, such as a proposed partnership with civic or local community organizations, participation at town hall meetings, etc., would strengthen the applicant's response and would effectively meet all factors of this Competitive Preference Priority.

**Reader's Score:**      3

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**Status:**               Submitted  
**Last Updated:**      08/04/2023 04:31 PM



Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/04/2023 04:38 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** NEBRASKA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY (S422B230010)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	20	20
<b>Need for Project</b>		
1. Need	25	25
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	25	25
<b>Adequacy of Resources</b>		
1. Adequacy of Resources	30	30
<b>Sub Total</b>	100	100
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
<b>Innovative Activities for Civic Engagement</b>		
1. Civic Engagement	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	5	5
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
<b>Student Access to Resources and Opportunities</b>		
1. Promoting Equity	7	7
<b>Sub Total</b>	7	7
<b>Total</b>	112	112

# Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - AHC-NA - 4: 84.422B

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

Applicant: NEBRASKA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY (S422B230010)

## Questions

### 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:
  - (i) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale. (10 points)
  - (ii) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition. (10 points)

#### Strengths:

The PROMISES project will allot 18 credit hours of graduate courses for 60 teachers to prepare teachers to meet the needs of underserved student populations in honors social studies courses at the secondary level. (e19).

Teachers who participate in the PROMISES Project is expected to apply the instructional framework of guided inquiry. (e. 29).

The result after implementation of the PROMISES content and practices in the classrooms will be greater persistence and success for students of color in honors social studies course in the areas of American history, civics, government, and geography. (e30).

As a part of its project design NWU will host AP Exam Prep Sessions for students and less experienced teachers to receive prep sessions and trainings from recognized experts and master teachers in AP exams that align with the project. (e17).

Teachers who participate in PROMISES will also receive training on anchor concepts that acknowledges identity, representation, and agency. (e27-e28).

The applicant provided a detailed course sequence as a part of its application and noted that each course allows teachers to make evidence-based decisions and adjust instruction for continuous improvement.

#### Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 20

### Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project. In determining the need for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:
  - i. The magnitude or severity of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project. (8

points)

ii. The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses. (7 points)

iii. The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project are focused on those with greatest needs. (10 points)

**Strengths:**

There is a disparity in enrollment in honors courses between racial identity groups in Lincoln Public Schools. (e35).

The PROMISES Project will address the gap in professional development in social studies honors courses in the identified subject areas of American history, civics, government, and geography. (e36).

Due to a more equitable process for advising students and based on current enrollment data, there will be more students of color enrolled in secondary honors courses in social studies for 2023-2024. (e36).

Enrollment in honors courses at the high school level will provide disadvantaged students with both preparation for college and access to honors courses that yield college credit. (e38).

The objectives of the PROMISES project are focused on improving the persistence and success of students of color in secondary social studies honors courses. (e38).

The proposed project is acknowledging and addressing the “representation gap” for students in the school district by offering a path to college credit and opportunities in honors social studies courses. (e38).

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were noted.

**Reader's Score:** 25

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

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

i. 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. (13 points)

ii. The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project. (12 points)

**Strengths:**

The PROMISES Project collects feedback and data to make evidence-based decisions for both continuous improvement both during and after the conclusion of the grant. (e48).

The PROMISES Project will produce three separate reports based on the goals of the grant: participation report, impact report, and disposition report. (e49-52).

The PROMISES Project will create an Equity Advisory Council for the project and a structure to receive feedback annually from students through Lincoln Public School's Equity Scholars Cadre. (e52).

The management plan and logic model ensure a high-quality project with the ability to measure results and make evidence-based adjustments to ensure continuous improvement throughout the terms of the project and beyond. (e40).

The project proposal presents a detailed management plan and the names and roles of key individuals who will support the capacity of implementing the grant. (e40-e41).

Project milestones and responsibilities, and the listing of key personnel are indicated on a timeline. (e44-e48).

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were noted.

**Reader's Score: 25**

**Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources**

1. The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the adequacy of resources, the Secretary considers the following factors:
  - i. The adequacy of support, including facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources, from the applicant organization or the lead applicant organization. (6 points)
  - ii. The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project. (8 points)
  - iii. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant, including a multiyear financial and operating model and accompanying plan; the demonstrated commitment of any partners; evidence of broad support from stakeholders (e.g., SEAs, LEAs, teachers' unions) critical to the project's long-term success; or more than one of these types of evidence. (8 points)
  - iv. The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project. (8 points)

**Strengths:**

Wesleyan Honors Academy is the university's dual enrollment program that allows high school students to earn college credit for courses taught by qualified faculty and participating teachers who complete the program will be eligible to become instructors in the dual enrollment program. (e53).

The participating teachers represent nearly 40% of secondary social studies teachers in the school district. (e54).

The project goals will shape teacher professional learning during and beyond the duration of the grant period. (e54).

The data and evidence will be shared with high school and middle school personnel at monthly meetings and the impact of the findings will shape social studies instruction well beyond the participating individual teachers. (e54-e55).

The continuing operation and success of the project beyond the scope of the grant is embedded in the project design and the infrastructure of each partnering institution. (e55).

The PROMISES Project emerges from a long and continuing partnership between NWU and Lincoln Public Schools. Additionally, as partners they have worked together on a series of projects on improving social studies education. (e56).

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were noted.

**Reader's Score:** 30

**Priority Questions****Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Innovative Activities for Civic Engagement****1. Competitive Preference Priority 1: Innovative Activities for Civic Engagement (up to 5 points)**

Under this priority, we provide funding to promote new and existing evidence-based strategies to encourage innovative civics and government learning strategies and professional development activities and programs for teachers, principals, or other school leaders, particularly such instruction, strategies, activities, and programs that benefit low income students and underserved populations. To meet this priority, a project must include one or both of the following-- a) Hands-on civic engagement activities for teachers and students; or b) Programs that educate students about the history and principles of the Constitution of the United States, including the Bill of Rights.

**Strengths:**

The applicant PROMISES provides students the opportunity to learn about the history and principles of the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights. (e57).

The graduate courses provided by PROMISES will demonstrate how teachers can create a bridge between the courses identified in this project and guided inquiries and themes addressed in the content of the courses. (e57-e58).

PROMISES will measure course and content effectiveness via classroom observations that will occur twice per semester. (e58).

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were noted.

**Reader's Score:** 5

**Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Student Access to Resources and Opportunities****1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities (up to 7 points)**

Under this priority, and applicant must demonstrate that the applicant proposes a project designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students—

a) in one or more of the following educational settings: (1) Early learning programs (2) Elementary school (3) Middle school (4) High school (5) Career and technical education programs (6) Out-of-schooltime settings (7) Alternative schools and programs (8) Juvenile justice system or correctional facilities

b) That examines the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, and that may include one or both of the following:

c) Rigorous, engaging, and well-rounded (e.g., that include music and the arts) approaches to learning that are inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status and prepare students for college, career, and civic life, including civics programs that support students in understanding and engaging in American democratic practices (up to 3 points).

d) Establishing, expanding, or improving the engagement of underserved community members (including underserved students and families) in informing and making decisions that influence policy and practice at the school, district, or State level by elevating their voices, through their participation and their perspectives and providing them with access to opportunities for leadership (e.g., establishing partnerships between civic student government programs and parent and caregiver leadership initiatives) (up to 4 points).

**Strengths:**

PROMISES will put 60 secondary social studies teachers through 18 graduate credit hours and utilize guided inquiry to address the instructional needs of under-served students. (e59).

The PROMISES project will hold regularly multicultural advisory committee with underrepresented students enrolled in honor social studies courses and will incorporate their feedback to create more equitable courses. (e59).

The PROMISES Project will host a day long Lincoln Public Schools Equity Scholars Cadre at NWU. The Cadre is made up of students across Lincoln and addresses issues of awareness and change in the schools and community. (e60).

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were noted.

**Reader's Score:**      **7**

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Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/07/2023 02:00 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** NEBRASKA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY (S422B230010)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	20	20
<b>Need for Project</b>		
1. Need	25	25
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	25	25
<b>Adequacy of Resources</b>		
1. Adequacy of Resources	30	30
<b>Sub Total</b>	100	100
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
<b>Innovative Activities for Civic Engagement</b>		
1. Civic Engagement	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	5	5
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
<b>Student Access to Resources and Opportunities</b>		
1. Promoting Equity	7	7
<b>Sub Total</b>	7	7
<b>Total</b>	112	112

# Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - AHC-NA - 4: 84.422B

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

Applicant: NEBRASKA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY (S422B230010)

## Questions

### 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:

- (i) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale. (10 points)
- (ii) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition. (10 points)

#### Strengths:

i. The applicant presents a convincing justification for the proposed project. The foundation of the PROMISES project is the implementation of several initiatives that link the goals of the Equity Goals of the Lincoln Board of Education with the mission of the American History and Civics Education National Activities program. The elected governing body of Lincoln Public Schools, a public school district that educates more than 40,000 students in a 290,000-person city, is known as the Lincoln Board of Education. In addition to several smaller focus program high schools and alternative education programs, Lincoln Public Schools has 12 middle schools, 8 full high schools, and 8 full high schools. The Lincoln Board of Education adopted a new strategic plan in April 2022 with the goal of achieving equitable results for all students enrolled in Lincoln Public Schools. Four overarching Board Equity Goals, each with specific action steps and strategies, are the focus of this strategic plan. To accomplish several of these action steps and strategies in the designated social studies subject areas of American history, civics, government, and geography, the PROMISES project will be a significant contributor. (e25-e30)

ii. The proposed project takes a particularly innovative approach to the priority or priorities chosen for the competition. In honors social studies courses, the PROMISES project will train teachers to assist underserved student populations. To prepare teachers to serve underserved student populations in secondary honors social studies courses, each of the 60 teachers will complete 18 credit hours of graduate coursework that will draw on current research on student learning in social studies. Teachers will specifically get ready to use a guided inquiry approach to meet the needs of students who might enroll in an honors course without having had enough time to prepare for it through their prior academic experiences. Through guided inquiry, teachers will be equipped to provide rigorous instruction and to meet the needs of learners who are underserved. With the help of this teaching strategy, teachers will have more opportunities to concentrate student learning on important concepts and goals. Guided inquiry, a variation on inquiry-based learning, shows promise for enabling teachers to strike a balance between honors course rigor and catering to the individual needs of students who might not have the same level of preparation for honors courses. Some background on current trends in social studies education will clarify the role of guided inquiry in our approach. (e30)

#### Weaknesses:

i. None noted.

ii. None noted.



**Selection Criteria - Need for Project**

- 1. The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project. In determining the need for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**
  - i. The magnitude or severity of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project. (8 points)**
  - ii. The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses. (7 points)**
  - iii. The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project are focused on those with greatest needs. (10 points)**

**Strengths:**

i. The applicant thoroughly describes the seriousness of the issue that the proposed project is intended to solve. It is a serious issue that needs to be addressed right away that different racial identity groups in Lincoln Public Schools enroll in honors courses at different rates. The applicant noted that they won't be able to meet that ongoing challenge for Lincoln, Nebraska's youth without significant action. To address these serious disparities in equitable opportunities and outcomes between students from racial identity groups in our city, the Lincoln Board of Education adopted "Board Equity Goals" in 2022. That strategic plan's four "Action Steps" include reducing the enrollment gap in honors courses by 75%. It also includes instructions to "provide and enhance comprehensive support for students and families of color to ensure success in honors courses" and "provide continuous professional learning for all teachers to support students of color." Currently, Lincoln Public Schools lacks the resources necessary to achieve these objectives in social studies courses. Only 7 hours of social studies teacher professional development can currently be required per contract year by LPS. This falls short of what is required to meet the "Board Equity Goals." The PROMISES project will fill the professional development gap for teachers of social studies honors courses in the identified subject areas of American history, civics, government, and geography by relying on Nebraska Wesleyan's ability to intervene. The disparity in student outcomes will continue without this intervention. (e35-e36)

ii. The proposed project will address the specific weaknesses or gaps in opportunities, infrastructure, or services that have been clearly identified, including their nature and size. Despite this rise in enrollment, two Lincoln high schools saw a significant number of students withdraw from the AP Human Geography course in the 2022–2023 academic year. At one high school, 27% of those who started the course dropped out before the semester was over. 22.5% of students at the other high school dropped the course. Although we lack the tools to fully investigate the causes of this high drop-out rate, a disproportionate number of those who fail the course identify as "Hispanic, Latino, Latina, or Latinx." 7 out of 18 (or 39%) of the students who were so identified failed the course at the first high school. Five out of the thirteen (38%) students who were so identified did not finish the course at the second high school. 20% (9 out of 44 white students) and 19% (21 out of 110 white students) were the corresponding percentages among white students at the same schools. Although these numbers are small, they show a clear disparity between racial identity groups and a general tendency for far too many students to drop the course. Since there were initially insufficient numbers of Black and Native American students enrolled at those schools, we did not conduct a comparable analysis. The PROMISES project aims to intervene to make that enrollment meaningful by promoting student persistence and success. Lincoln Public Schools is taking steps to increase enrollment. (e36)

iii. Those with the greatest needs are clearly the focus of the proposed project. Increasing the persistence and success of students of color in secondary social studies honors courses is a key goal of the PROMISES project. By attempting to increase the participation of students of color in honors courses, this fills an immediate gap in the equity goals set forth by the Lincoln School Board. Other needs of these students will also be met by the intervention, both during and after the grant funding's term. First, enrolling in honors classes in high school will give disadvantaged students access to honors

classes that count toward college credit as well as college preparation. Gaining college credits while still in high school may enable students to finish their studies at college earlier or make it simpler to juggle a demanding course load with a job. However, if students can persevere and do well in college-credit-bearing courses, then this beneficial effect will materialize. This intervention aims to support that perseverance and achievement. Second, encouraging enrollment and success in honors courses at more equal rates can aid in addressing other inequalities in our educational system. According to data analyzed by the National Working Group on Advanced Education and released in June 2023, Nebraska experiences a "representation gap" when it comes to identifying students for advanced educational opportunities (also known as "gifted and talented programs"). The data shows that among students in Nebraska who are identified for gifted and talented programs, students who identify as Black, Hispanic, or Native American are underrepresented. The project can help close the "representation gap" for students in the school district by providing a path to college credit and opportunities in honors social studies courses (Finn & Scanlan, 2020). (e38)

**Weaknesses:**

- i. None noted.
- ii. None noted.
- iii. None Noted.

**Reader's Score:      25**

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

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**
  - i. 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. (13 points)**
  - ii. The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project. (12 points)**

**Strengths:**

- i. The management strategy that will be used to complete the project's goals on schedule and within budget, together with clearly defined roles, deadlines, and checkpoints. A team of social studies experts with years of expertise and a track record of success in delivering teacher professional development are called upon by the management plan. The team is backed by organizations, including NWU and LPS, is dedicated to the project's success, and is in a good position to accomplish the project's goals. The management plan and logic model guarantee the implementation of a high-quality project with the ability to evaluate project outcomes and make evidence-based changes to guarantee ongoing improvement over the course of the project and beyond. Graduate courses will be developed in collaboration with the Social Studies Curriculum Team from Lincoln Public Schools (K–12 Social Studies Curriculum Specialist, and K–12 Teacher Leader for Social Studies), which includes the project director and professor of history at NWU. In the past, the National Women's University and Lincoln Public Schools have collaborated successfully on grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Library of Congress, and the United States Department of Education for Teaching American History, Teaching with Primary Sources, and Landmarks of American History. The appointment of a grant coordinator will also be crucial to the management plan. As a full-time employee of the social studies team at the Lincoln Public Schools Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, this teacher will have expertise teaching honors courses. As soon as the financing period starts, we will post a job listing for it and start the hiring process. By January

2024, we hope to have someone hired so that the new team member can start working on all project-related tasks. (e40, e48-e49)

ii. The suitability of processes for assuring feedback and ongoing improvement in the proposed project's operations. The foundation of the PROMISES project is gathering feedback and data to inform evidence-based decisions for ongoing improvement both during and after the grant funding's required term. Analysis of assessment data will be crucial for ongoing grant monitoring and adjustment, as well as for recording the effects of grant activities. Using two comparison approaches, data pertinent to both short- and long-term outcomes will be examined. The initiative includes a plan to engage underserved communities and students and involve them in the decision-making process in addition to gathering this data to support evidence-based decisions for ongoing improvement. This notably relates to the establishment of an Equity Advisory Council for the project and a mechanism to obtain yearly feedback from students via the Equity Scholars Cadre at Lincoln Public School. (e49-52)

**Weaknesses:**

- i. None noted.
- ii. None noted.

**Reader's Score:**      25

**Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources**

1. **The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the adequacy of resources, the Secretary considers the following factors:**
  - i. **The adequacy of support, including facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources, from the applicant organization or the lead applicant organization. (6 points)**
  - ii. **The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project. (8 points)**
  - iii. **The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant, including a multiyear financial and operating model and accompanying plan; the demonstrated commitment of any partners; evidence of broad support from stakeholders (e.g., SEAs, LEAs, teachers' unions) critical to the project's long-term success; or more than one of these types of evidence. (8 points)**
  - iv. **The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project. (8 points)**

**Strengths:**

i. The quality of the applicant organizations or the lead applicant organization's support, including its buildings, tools, supplies, and other resources. On its campus in Lincoln, NWU is a private, independent liberal arts college that offers exceptional instruction to both traditional and non-traditional students at the undergraduate and graduate levels. All academic programs at NWU are accredited by prestigious regional and national organizations; NWU has had regional accreditation from the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) since 1914. The PROMISES project has the full support of NWU, which will give it all of its resources (see letter of commitment in Appendix E). On its conveniently situated campus, NWU will provide grant-related events like graduate classes, AP Exam Review sessions, and other chances for professional development. Courses won't need any new supplies or equipment from the grant and will be taught in regular classroom structures. Parking will be free, and there won't be any further costs for participating teachers. Participating professors will have access to all student support services, including the Registrar and Computing Services, just like any other graduate student at NWU. In conclusion, NWU possesses the infrastructure, materials, and tools required to fully offer this project. (e52)

ii. In light of the goals, layout, and possible importance of the proposed project, the prices are appropriate. Each project expense directly contributes to the goals and is an appropriate investment given the size and scope of the project (see budget and budget story). The proposed initiative will have a major impact on students' learning experiences in secondary honors social studies classes, particularly those of students from marginalized areas. This project will train 60 secondary social studies teachers to teach honors social studies courses with an emphasis on rigor and equity during the length of the grant time. These educators, who make up almost 40% of the district's secondary social studies faculty, have the potential to annually have an impact on tens of thousands of students. Many of these high school teachers will teach in Nebraska Wesleyan's dual enrollment program, where they will give students the chance to take those courses for college credit. (e53)

iii. A multiyear financial and operating model and accompanying plan, the demonstrated commitment of partners, and evidence of widespread support from stakeholders (e.g., SEAs, LEAs, teachers' unions) that is critical to the project's long-term success, or more than one of these types of evidence are all ways the applicant can show that it has the resources to run the project beyond the duration of the grant. The three-year funding period will enable us to put into practice a strategy that can significantly impact the persistence and achievement of students of color in honors secondary social studies courses, as well as advance the related Equity Goals of the Lincoln Board of Education. The project's design and alignment with the capabilities and infrastructure of each participating institution ensure that it will continue to operate and be successful after the grant funding term has ended. This is clear in two different ways. First, the grant activities will enable them to apply a particular strategy included in the curriculum materials and continuing professional development plan for social studies in Lincoln Public Schools, in addition to preparing teachers for long-term success. Second, by maintaining the dual enrollment program at Nebraska Wesleyan, students will continue to have access to the project's teachers and courses while also maintaining access to high-quality honors courses. (e53-e55)

v. The importance of each partner in the proposed project and their commitment to its implementation and success. The PROMISES project is the result of a long-standing collaboration between Lincoln Public Schools and NWU. Over the years, the partners have successfully collaborated on several projects aimed at strengthening social studies instruction, particularly those involving the participation of underrepresented populations. This contains several prosperous Teaching American History grants as well as grants from the Library of Congress for Teaching using Primary Sources. The dual enrollment program at NWU is available to all LPS high schools, and NWU frequently organizes social studies professional development activities for the district. The mission statement and fundamental values at NWU both emphasize serving the neighborhood. (e40)

**Weaknesses:**

i. None noted.

ii. None noted.

iii. None noted.

v. None noted.

**Reader's Score: 30**

**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Innovative Activities for Civic Engagement**

**1. Competitive Preference Priority 1: Innovative Activities for Civic Engagement (up to 5 points)**

Under this priority, we provide funding to promote new and existing evidence-based strategies to encourage innovative civics and government learning strategies and professional development activities and programs for teachers, principals, or other school leaders, particularly such instruction, strategies, activities, and programs that benefit low income students and underserved populations. To meet this priority, a project must include one or both of the following-- a) Hands-on civic engagement activities for teachers and students; or b) Programs that educate students about the history and principles of the Constitution of the United States, including the Bill of Rights.

**Strengths:**

The PROMISES project uses a cutting-edge method to teach children about the background and tenets of the US Constitution and Bill of Rights. For ninth graders, Lincoln Public Schools offers a civics course. The district does not, however, provide a government and politics subject until the twelfth grade. This can cause a significant knowledge gap in several areas. Teachers frequently lament that they must spend an excessive amount of time in their Government and Politics classes going over the fundamental information that students "should have learned" in Civics. A solution is suggested by PROMISES to deal with this issue. The autumn and spring graduate evening courses will have a section devoted to discussing issues that can be incorporated into the curriculum of the courses mentioned in this project. This can serve as a "bridge" between ninth-grade civics and geography instruction, eleventh-grade US history instruction, and twelfth-grade government and politics instruction. (e57-58)

**Weaknesses:**

None noted.

**Reader's Score:**      5

**Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Student Access to Resources and Opportunities**

**1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities (up to 7 points)**

Under this priority, and applicant must demonstrate that the applicant proposes a project designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students—

a) in one or more of the following educational settings: (1) Early learning programs (2) Elementary school (3) Middle school (4) High school (5) Career and technical education programs (6) Out-of-schooltime settings (7) Alternative schools and programs (8) Juvenile justice system or correctional facilities

b) That examines the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, and that may include one or both of the following:

c) Rigorous, engaging, and well-rounded (e.g., that include music and the arts) approaches to learning that are inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status and prepare students for college, career, and civic life, including civics programs that support students in understanding and engaging in American democratic practices (up to 3 points).

d) Establishing, expanding, or improving the engagement of underserved community members (including underserved students and families) in informing and making decisions that influence policy and practice at the school, district, or State level by elevating their voices, through their participation and their perspectives and providing them with access to opportunities for leadership (e.g., establishing partnerships between civic student government programs and parent and caregiver leadership initiatives) (up to 4 points).

**Strengths:**

The PROMISES project addresses this competitive priority by listening to students from underserved student populations, regularly convening a multicultural advisory committee made up of members from backgrounds that are currently underrepresented in honor social studies courses and incorporating this feedback into the efforts to create more equitable courses. Students from underserved racial identification groups will provide the applicant with feedback in a variety of ways. The first three project objectives all relate to encouraging equity in access to opportunities and resources. To develop instruction that meets the needs of these underserved students, guided inquiry and the anchor concepts of identity, representation, and agency will be emphasized in 18 graduate credit hours that will be taken by 60 secondary social studies teachers. To guarantee that every student gets help outside of the classroom, this also entails opening access to AP Exam review sessions. The project's hallmark, as stated in the rationale and reinforced by the evaluation plan, is, in essence, equitable access to opportunities and resources. (e59-60)

**Weaknesses:**

None noted.

**Reader's Score:**      7

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