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

**Applicant:** Noble Network of Charter Schools -- Administrative/Support Team, (U282M100031)

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<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
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**Total** 100 82
Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Eligible Applicant

1. In determining the quality of the applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors:
   (i) The degree to which the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement and attainment for all students, including educationally disadvantaged students, served by charter schools operated or managed by the applicant.
   (ii) The degree to which the applicant has demonstrated success in closing historic achievement gaps for the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II).
   (iii) The degree to which the applicant has achieved results for low-income and minority students that are significantly above the average academic achievement results for such students in the State.

Applicants are invited to submit objective data that they believe would provide relevant information in support of these three factors, along with comparison data for similar schools, where available. In particular, the Secretary is interested in the following data: (1) Performance (school-wide and by subgroup) on statewide tests of all charter schools operated or managed by the applicant as compared to all students in other schools in the State or States at the same grade level, and as compared with other schools serving similar demographics of students; (2) annual student attendance and retention rates (school-wide and by subgroup), and comparisons with other similar schools; (3) where applicable and available, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates (school-wide and by subgroup) of students attending schools operated or managed by the applicant.

When reporting data for schools in States that may have particularly demanding or low standards of proficiency (for example, see the report available at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/studies/201456.pdf), applicants are invited to discuss how their academic success might be considered against applicants from across the country.

Strengths:

Noble has a ten year track record of performance and currently educates more than 3,500 students at 9 high schools in Chicago. Noble plans to expand to sixteen campuses and 10,000 students by 2015. Noble serves 90% low income students where more than 95% are students of color. Noble has developed a strong college going culture where more than 96% of the most recent graduating class will attend college this fall. The organization maintains a 2,000 student waiting list, demonstrating demand for more schools, and has several key community partnerships in place.

Noble significantly closes the achievement gap between sub groups by providing an extended day and year model that provides students striving for proficiency with more instructional minutes and focused intervention strategies. Noble utilizes a benchmark system to improve teaching and uses data to determine what best practices to disseminate throughout the Noble Network. Noble has strong political buy in by the Mayor of Chicago and CPS CEO Ron Huberman. These relationships have created opportunities for Noble to expand into underutilized CPS schools. Noble has been a model that has been studied by several charter networks and Chicago Public Schools.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader’s Score: 50

Selection Criteria - Contribution assisting disadvantaged
1. The contribution the proposed project will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged students served by the applicant to meet or exceed State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards, and to graduate college- and career-ready.

Strengths:
Noble provides several statistics that demonstrate their ability to educate disadvantaged children effectively. Nearly 96% of students from the most recent graduating class are attending college this fall. Graduation rates for Noble are higher than state averages and significantly higher than CPS averages, including nearly three times higher graduation rates for students of color attending CPS. On assessment such as the PSAE, Noble students are performing higher than CPS or the statewide averages in several subjects including writing and math. Noble's average 2009 ACT score was the highest of any open enrollment high school in Chicago and is one point shy of the average for all of Illinois. Attendance and ACT scores at each of their campuses are generally higher than neighborhood schools.

Weaknesses:
The program lacked clarity on how they support English Language Learners or specific data that measures their progress.

Reader's Score: 13

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--
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(ii) The extent to which the design for implementing and evaluating the proposed project will result in information to guide possible replication of project activities or strategies, including information about the effectiveness of the approach or strategies employed by the project.

Strengths:
Noble has a clear and measured approach to growth. The organization is equipped to scale at two schools per year and they have a one-year principal internship (e20, 21), similar to other leading national models, to help ensure the quality and consistency of leadership. The Green Lighting criteria for new schools is clear and is set up to help Noble avoid the pitfalls of replication. The organizational growth milestones (Attachment 7) were clear.
Noble provided proof of matching funds and an impressive list of donor supporters and educational partners. The plan is multi-year and will allow the CMO to be fully enrolled and break even financially by the end of year 5.

Weaknesses:
Noble did not identify which staff members were responsible for individual workstreams.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel to replicate and expand high-quality charter schools. In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers--
(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.
(ii) The business plan for increasing, sustaining, and ensuring the quality and performance of charter schools opened under this program beyond the initial period of Federal funding, including, but not limited to facilities, financials, central office, academics, governance, oversight, and human resources of the schools.

(iii) A multi-year financial and operating model for the organization, as well as a demonstrated commitment of current and future partners, and evidence of broad support from stakeholders critical to the project's long-term success.

(iv) A plan for closing charter schools supported, overseen, or managed by the applicant that do not meet high standards of quality.

(v) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, CEO/organization leader, and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project.

Strengths:
The management team includes founders with experience in education and a senior leadership team with significant experience in their areas of focus. The scale up strategy for the central office staff is clearly stated and appears appropriate for the projected growth. The board has a clear policy for school closure due to non-performance.

Weaknesses:
Noble lacks a senior manager with significant federal grant experience. The management plan lacked commonly presented information such as project timelines, objectives and benchmark. The application lacked explicit operational and student performance targets that are capable of being tracked over time. It may have helped to include portions of the organization's strategic plan in future applications.

Reader's Score: 11

Overall Comments - Overall Comments

1. Please provide a summary of comments for this application. There are no points awarded in this section. Please enter 0 for the minimum and maximum scores.

General:
Noble is a strong CMO with a coherent and achievable growth model. They have a profound positive effect on the children they serve. For future applications, Noble should consider spending more time on the information asked for the management plan section.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/13/2010 01:03 AM
# Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Noble Network of Charter Schools -- Administrative/Support Team, (U282M100031)  
**Reader #2:** **********

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| **Total**                       | 100             | 91            |
Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - Panel - 5: 84.282M

Reader #2: **********
Applicant: Noble Network of Charter Schools -- Administrative/Support Team, (U282M100031)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Eligible Applicant

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   (iii) The degree to which the applicant has achieved results for low-income and minority students that are significantly above the average academic achievement results for such students in the State.

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Strengths:

The Noble network is a high-quality applicant. With 11 years of experience, the system has built nine campuses and still has a significant waiting list (p.e0). Noble is the top-ranked open enrollment high school in Chicago on the ACT (abstract). Ninety-six percent of Noble seniors in the class of 2010 will be attending college, the majority of whom will be the first in their families to go to college (p.2). Noble schools have triple the average percentage of students meeting and exceeding standards on the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE) than other Chicago public schools (p.3). When compared to nearby public schools, Noble network students exceed their peers in terms of graduation rates and PSAE scores by an even greater magnitude (p.5). Noble schools have significantly reduced the gap in test scores between their students and students statewide particularly in writing (p.11-12). The network has raised significant private funding from community organizations and foundations (p.e1-3).

Weaknesses:

The application does not provide grade level achievement scores for its nine schools.

Reader's Score: 48

Selection Criteria - Contribution assisting disadvantaged

1. The contribution the proposed project will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged students served by the applicant to meet or exceed State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards, and to graduate college- and career-ready.
Strengths:
The contribution that Noble schools make toward the education of disadvantaged students is significant and further replication will increase the number of students served by this high-quality network. The Noble network serves a student body that is predominantly of low income and minority status (p.60). Noble students have significantly higher rates of proficiency on state tests, graduation rates, and college attendance rates than nearby schools and Chicago schools as a whole (p.5-12). In fact, Noble student performance is close to the state average and slightly above in writing (p.12). Noble schools have a curriculum that is aligned to ACT's college readiness skills (p.13) and schools invest considerable time helping students with college writing and college counseling (p.14). After graduation, a Noble alumni coordinator works with graduates to help them secure resources needed to persist in college (p.15). On pages 36-38, the applicant provides additional details about its curriculum and how it meets the needs of its student population.

Weaknesses:
The application does not provide details about how it provides support for students who are in special education or who are English language learners. Additional detail on this vital activities would be helpful in considering the contribution made to educationally disadvantaged students.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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   (ii) The extent to which the design for implementing and evaluating the proposed project will result in information to guide possible replication of project activities or strategies, including information about the effectiveness of the approach or strategies employed by the project.

Strengths:
Noble's vision is to expand to 16 campuses in five years (p.16). Given the track record of this organization, this goal appears achievable. The organization has developed a Green Lighting Criteria that provides a standard for whether the organization is prepared to expand and steps for acting upon that information (p.17-18). The Green Lighting Criteria appears to provide the organization with a simple but effective tool for determining next steps. The organization engages in strategic planning and has Strategic Plan Performance Goals for the organization as a whole. The Strategic Plan Performance Goals provide a baseline data and desired outcomes for all Noble schools by 2015 (p. 20). The applicant uses its Green Lighting Criteria and performance goals to track its performance at new schools. The information enables the organization to refine its replication efforts (p.21-22).

Weaknesses:
None noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

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(v) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, CEO/organization leader, and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project.

Strengths:
The budget narrative provides a clear description of how the organization will expend the grant (appendix). The application describes how a school can lose its charter (p.26) and under what conditions the Noble superintendent and CEO will work with individual principals when schools fail to meet Network standards (p.27). The application designates a project manager (p.28). The superintendent, CAO, chief development officer, chief education officer, director of facilities, director of human resources, and the director of information technology all have extensive professional experience in education, finance and operations that will enable them to oversee current and new schools (p.28-31 and appendix). The application provides a description of the support services that the central office provides to its schools (p.39-42).

Weaknesses:
While the application presents overall student achievement goals for all of its schools to be achieved by 2015 and the operational target of six new schools, the proposal does not provide a clear yearly or monthly timeline or milestones for the goals and outcomes. The application does not break down the activities required to open new schools over the course of the grant.

Reader's Score: 20

Overall Comments - Overall Comments

1. Please provide a summary of comments for this application. There are no points awarded in this section. Please enter 0 for the minimum and maximum scores.

   General:
The Noble Network of Charter Schools has an exceptional track record of helping low income and minority students attain significantly higher achievement and graduation rates. Further replication will benefit additional students and strengthen the Chicago Public School system.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/15/2010 04:38 PM
**Technical Review Coversheet**

**Applicant:** Noble Network of Charter Schools -- Administrative/Support Team, (U282M100031)

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

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**Overall Comments**

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**Total**

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Questions

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Strengths:

Noble started with one high school in 1999. Since 2006, Noble has opened nine high schools in the Chicago area serving grades 9-12. The 10th school is slated to open in 2010. The student body at Noble is 65% Hispanic, 30% Black, 3% multi-racial and 2% unclassified. During the 2010-2011 school year, Noble will serve 5,000 low-income students in the Chicago area. Noble has established a track record and a need for expansion with 2000 students waiting for their opportunity to become a part of the Noble family (Page e0).

Noble students are outperforming students in Chicago Public Schools as measured by the Prairie State Achievement Exam (52% vs. 16.3%) and the ACT 19.5 vs. 17.6). Since 2003, the average ACT score for students has increased (Page e3).

According to the 2009 ACT scores, Noble is a top-ranked open enrollment charter high school. In 2009, 95% of the students graduated with 89% enrolling in college. In 2010, the number of students graduating increased to 99% with 96% enrolling in college. Noble has graduated more than 1000 students since 2003 (Page e8).

Noble is successful in closing the subgroup achievement gap with students entering their campus 3 to 4 grade levels behind. To close the achievement gap, students at Noble are given more instructional time. Campuses operate on a longer school year, with extended school days and longer class periods (Pages e0-e1).

During the 2009 school year, Noble schools outperformed schools located in the same neighborhoods it serves (Page e4). The attendance and graduation rates were consistently higher, as well as performance on the ACT. In comparison to other top rated charter schools (e.g., Boston Collegiate and North Star Academy) across the US, Noble stands on its own (Page e5).
Weaknesses:
Noble appears data rich; however, disaggregated data was not presented.

Reader's Score: 45

Selection Criteria - Contribution assisting disadvantaged

1. The contribution the proposed project will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged students served by the applicant to meet or exceed State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards, and to graduate college- and career-ready.

Strengths:
The contribution the proposed project will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged students served by the applicant to meet or exceed State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards, and to graduate college- and career-ready.

Noble was established to provide a high quality education to economically disadvantaged students. Noble has created a rigorous college ready atmosphere. Students visit local and regional colleges and participate in extended academic summer programs on college campuses (Page e13). During the senior year, students are required to take a College Writing course to assist them in completing college applications. Not only does Noble offer a rigorous academic program, students are afforded the opportunity to enroll in nationally recognized elective courses (Page e14).

Weaknesses:
Noble did not clearly address the needs of ESE students.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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Strengths:
Noble has outlined performance goals via Green Lighting Criteria to ensure a quality academic program that is fiscally sound (Page e16). The Green Lighting Criteria is used to ensure that the necessary components are in place for expansion and capacity building. The Green Lighting Criteria measures/evaluates performance goals as new campuses are considered and opened.

Noble requires each of its departments to establish and follow milestones which are aligned to the core performance goals (Page e18).
Noble's track record of academic achievement with low-income minority students and its ability to open new campuses (10) is evident in its ability to replicate the Noble Networking Model. Noble has created a strategic plan to open six additional campuses by 2015, serving 10,000 students (Page e20).

To ensure academic success, Noble developed a Curriculum and Assessment Program. Data from quarterly assessments assist in improving instruction and assessing best-practices.

Noble has an intensive professional develop program that is data driven (Page e6).

Weaknesses:
NA

Reader’s Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

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   (v) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, CEO/organization leader, and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project.

Strengths:

To ensure the success of the expansion, Noble completed a 5 year strategic plan to increase its campus from 10 to 16 campuses with the capacity to serve 10,000 students. The strategic plan provides the guidance to ensure success. Noble Network wants to remain fiscally responsible and stable. They have an organization plan that provides for additional personnel at the school level, as well as at the administration level to support the current and new campuses. The Board of Directors for Noble is responsible for reviewing milestones and financial reports, as well as the academic performance of all schools. Noble will establish an Alumni coordinator to support Noble’s growing alumni.

Noble has received over 35 million dollars in private donations since 2006. This dollar amount demonstrates the fact that others see Noble’s success and want to ensure the success of the Noble student body.

Noble has a provision in its Charter Agreement that describes a plan for closing non-performing charter schools - "Clause 13- Revocation of the Charter" (Page e25).

Noble’s executive team is experienced in program development and expansion. The job descriptions of their roles are provided (Pages e26-e30). Noble has also created a team of professional leaders that range from facilities maintenance department leaders to support team members who perform cultural audits to academic leaders.
The Noble Network of Charter Schools is requesting grant funds for equipment only. Non-federal grant funds are budgeted for other expenditures.

Noble's objective is to increase the number of students it serves, as well as improve the academic performance of its students (Page e0).

Noble's schools are located in communities where access to high performing schools is limited to low-income students.

Noble's Networking has developed an Accountability Plan that is published yearly. This plan is used as a method to communicate clear and consistent standards to students, parents and the public (Exhibit D).

Noble has a clear timeline for the expansion schools with a philanthropic network of supporters ready to provide matching funds. The network of supporters is impressive and a testament to Noble's success in providing academic access to low income minority students (Pages e2 - e3).

**Weaknesses:**

NA

**Reader's Score:** 25

**Overall Comments - Overall Comments**

1. Please provide a summary of comments for this application. There are no points awarded in this section. Please enter 0 for the minimum and maximum scores.

   **General:**

   Noble started with one high school in 1999 and has expanded to 10. Noble Charter schools are high performing even though they serve disadvantaged students. The students of Noble consistently outperform the traditional public schools in the neighborhoods where they exist.

   Noble has developed a model that has a proven track record for increasing the academic achievement of low-income, disadvantaged students. In addition, Noble has the capacity to insure successful expansion of its model.

   **Reader's Score:** 0

**Status:** Submitted

**Last Updated:** 08/20/2010 03:37 PM