

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

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Replication & Expansion - 2: 84.282M

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Achievement First, Inc. (U282M150005)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Eligible Applicant

1. (Note: Please provide your detailed comments for each of the following factors in the Quality of the Eligible Applicant Sub-Questions.)

In determining the quality of the applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors--

(1) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement and attainment for all students, including, as applicable, educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (20 points).

(2) Either

(i) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, 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) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant, or

(ii) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which there have not been significant achievement gaps between any of the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant and to which significant gains in student academic achievement have been made with all populations of students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (15 points).

(3) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has achieved results (including performance on statewide tests, annual student attendance and retention rates, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates where applicable and available) for low-income and other educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant that are significantly above the average academic achievement results for such students in the State (15 points).

General:

Achievement First (AF) is a growing CMO network of public charter schools in Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven, CT; Brooklyn, NY and Providence, RI. Established in 2003, it is currently operating 29 schools serving over 9500 students in grades K-12.

AF has been overall consistent for the past three years in demonstrating success in increasing student academic achievement and attainment for all students, including educationally disadvantaged students.

Within the application, data wasn't consistently presented.

Reader's Score: 47

Sub Question

1. Quality of the Eligible Applicant - Part 1

(1) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement and attainment for all students, including, as applicable, educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (20 points).

Sub Question

Strengths:

Achievement First (AF) is a growing CMO network of public charter schools in Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven, CT; Brooklyn, NY and Providence, RI. Established in 2003, it is currently operating 29 schools serving over 9500 students in grades K-12. Over the past three years, AF has been able to demonstrate overall success in increasing student academic achievement for its students.

The mission of AF is to deliver on the promise of equal educational opportunity for all of America's children. "We believe that all children, regardless of race or economic status, can succeed if they have access to a great education." [e12]

Across the AF network of schools, the majority of AF students can be defined as educationally disadvantaged students. Ninety-eight percent are African-American or Hispanic (26% Hispanic; 72% African American) and 85% are low income/Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL) eligible. AF also serves ELL student (6%) and Students with Disabilities (10%).

Achievement First has been able to demonstrate success in increasing student academic achievement for its students. This is evidenced by:

- 100% of AF's six high school graduating classes to date have college acceptances
- 82% are still persisting in college

On state assessment data provided in the application, for AF testing grades, the network has outperformed NY and CT.

In New York, even with the transition to Common Core Standards (which resulted in a drop in state assessment scores from 2012 to 2013 in proficiency rates by an average of 30% in ELA and 41% in Math) AF still outperformed NY state scores.

In Connecticut, field testing on new assessments were done so result for 2014 were not provided. The application did include performance data for 2013. The data provided shows that AF students outperformed the state and host districts.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score:

2. Quality of the Eligible Applicant - Part 2

(2) Either

(i) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, 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) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant, or

(ii) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which there have not been significant achievement gaps between any of the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant and to which significant gains in student academic achievement have been made with all populations of students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (15 points).

Strengths:

AF has demonstrated success in closing historic achievement gaps for the subgroups of students. As indicated below, the vast majority of AF students fall under the subgroups defined for this CSP grant. Generally and overall (with some drops in performance), AF subgroups outperform host districts and the states where AF schools are

Sub Question

located. More details on subgroup breakdown are additionally provided in Appendix F.

Across the AF network of schools, the students being served are:

- 98% students are African American or Hispanic (26% Hispanic; 72% African American)
- 85% are low income/Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL) eligible
- 6% English Language Learners (ELL) across network (8% NY; 6%, 17% RI)
- 10% Students with Disabilities (SWD) across network (18.8% NY; 12% CT; 11.6% RI) [e23]

On state assessment data provided in the application, AF has outperformed NY and CT (it should be noted in RI there are no testing grades yet).

In New York, even with the transition to Common Core Standards (which resulted in a drop in state assessment scores from 2012 to 2013 in proficiency rates by an average of 30% in ELA and 41% in Math) AF still outperformed NY state scores.

- 2013: 46% math; 28% ELA
- For testing grades, AF students outperformed peers in NY state, NYC, and host districts in 2013 and 2014 [e32-34]
- For high school Regents exams, AF's pass rates surpass those of host districts and state
- o 2014: 88% ELA, 89% Algebra [e34]

In Connecticut, field testing on new assessments were done so results for 2014 were not provided. The application did include performance data for 2013. The data provided shows that AF students outperformed the state and host districts.

- 2013: 83% student at/above proficient in CMT (3-8th) and CAPT (10th grade)
- Outperformed host districts and state [e30-31]
- 2013: 84% 10th graders proficient in an average of all subjects on CAPT surpass host districts & state [e32]

Weaknesses:

The state assessment data is not delineated between ELA & Math performance for grades 3-8. In both the narrative and Appendix F, data is presented as a block so it is difficult to gauge growth/progress from year to year. It is also unclear if AF uses an internal network assessment or if the network collects comparative school based data.

It is not clear why Connecticut's demographic data presented is from 2011-12 though those for NY and RI are from 2013-14. An explanation is not provided.

Reader's Score:

3. Quality of the Eligible Applicant - Part 3

(3) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has achieved results (including performance on statewide tests, annual student attendance and retention rates, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates where applicable and available) for low-income and other educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant that are significantly above the average academic achievement results for such students in the State (15 points).

Sub Question

Strengths:

AF has consistently been on par with or outperformed its host districts and states in achieving results for low-income and other educationally disadvantaged students. Over the past three years, though there have been drops in performance because of the transition to Common Core Standards in both NY and CT, AF schools in both states have been on par with or outperformed their host districts and states.

As indicated previously, the vast majority of AF students fall under the subgroups defined for this CSP grant. Generally and overall (with some drops in performance), AF subgroups outperform host districts and the states where AF schools are located. More details on subgroup breakdown are additionally provided in Appendix F.

Achievement First has been able to demonstrate success in increasing student academic achievement for its students. AF has:

- College acceptance rates: 100% of AF's six high school graduating classes
- Persistence in college: 82%
- Student attendance: 2014-15, 97% [e39-40], consistent over last 3 years
- Student retention: 2014-15, 92% [e41-42], consistent over last 3 years
- In 2014-15, for FRL: 93%; SWD 92%; ELL 94%
- HS gradation:
- CT: 2014: 80% (4-year rate); 2013 74.5% (4-yr rate)
- NY: 2014 72% (4-year rate); 2013 71.4% (4-yr rate)

Weaknesses:

AF's calculations for student retention do not include "acceptable withdrawals" students. The list of acceptable withdrawals is comprehensive and the exclusion of this date skews the retention information. Acceptable withdrawals are defined as:

- o Transfer to a different AF school
- o Moving
- o Transportation issues
- o Admit to competitive, admission-based school
- o Leaving because of a sibling
- o Transfer to specialized school because of Special Education and IEP

The high school graduation data does not include information from 2012. In addition, AF includes in its calculations for graduation include those that "Likely graduated outside of AF" and removes those that "Left Public School system/state" [e43, appendix h]. As the network cannot confirm graduation for those that left AF, that data, like that of those that left the public school system, should not be included.

AF also does not track rates by subgroup, which it openly acknowledges. It has intentions of doing so in the future.

Reader's Score:

Selection Criteria - Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students

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. When responding to this selection criterion, applicants must discuss the proposed locations of schools to be created or substantially expanded and the student populations to be served.**

Note: The Secretary encourages applicants to describe their prior success in improving educational achievement and outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and English learners. In addition, the Secretary encourages applicants to address how they will ensure that all eligible students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education and

how the proposed project will assist educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and English learners, in mastering State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.

Strengths:

Achievement First's education program has proven, via the data provided, to assist educationally disadvantaged students to meet or exceed State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards. The vast majority of AF students are educationally disadvantaged students and as previously on state assessment data, AF students outperform its host districts and States. AF program features:

- Focus on student achievement & closing achievement gap
- talent development
- more time spent on learning
- common core aligned curriculum
- data and interventions for struggling students
- strong school culture

The application provided language on serving SWD with a least restrictive environment and being compliant with IDEA. It should be noted that LEA status varies between states.

AF proposes to continue to grown in existing communities that have disadvantaged populations. In CT, it is serving a Promise Zone designated area. Part of the AF model is to form a cluster of schools to provide disadvantaged students with a K-12 education. A cluster is 2 elementary schools, 2 middle schools feeding into 1 high school.

Weaknesses:

The application provided language on serving SWD with a least restrictive environment and being compliant with IDEA. A similar description of ELL supports was not provided.

Reader's Score: 9

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 extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified, measurable, and attainable. Applicants proposing to open schools serving substantially different populations than those currently served by the model for which they have demonstrated evidence of success must address the attainability of outcomes given this difference.**

Strengths:

The application adequately describes the design of the proposed project. It provided tables that are detailed by Objectives and subcategories. The goals, objectives and outcomes are clearly specified, measurable and attainable.

The application Project Goals are:

- Quality: grow by 5,000 students
- Scale: prove achievement gap can be closed at a district scale

The Outcomes are also clearly provided [e17]; e51-52 tables:

- 1) The growth of the network will be over 14,000 students in 42 schools. This is the equivalent of a school district. AF will open on average 3 schools per year. [chart on pages e26-7]
- 2) AF will close the achievement gap for educationally disadvantaged students
- 3) For AF students, 100% will achieve 4-year college acceptance rates; 95% college matriculation for graduating seniors;

and 75% 6-yr college persistence rate.

4) AF will have 96% student attendance rate; 90% student retention rate; 75% new teacher offer acceptance rate; 80% teacher & principal retention rate, and waitlist students of at least 100% of enrollment targets.

5) AF will operate w/in sustainable budget.

Weaknesses:

The charters for expansion have yet to be received. The application has broad assumption that 15 additional charters will be received and current charters will be revised to allow for continued expansion without a challenge by the appropriate authorizer.

Within the application an explanation of college persistence is not articulated. [e52] How this will happen and AF's role in making it happens with its students isn't described.

Reader's Score: 9

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. (Note: Please provide your detailed comments for each of the following factors in the Quality of the Management Plan Sub-Questions.)

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel to replicate and substantially expand high-quality charter schools (as defined in this notice). In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers-

(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 (4 points).

(2) The business plan for improving, sustaining, and ensuring the quality and performance of charter schools created or substantially expanded under these grants beyond the initial period of Federal funding in areas including, but not limited to, facilities, financial management, central office, student academic achievement, governance, oversight, and human resources of the charter schools (4 points).

(3) A multi-year financial and operating model for the organization, a demonstrated commitment of current and future partners, and evidence of broad support from stakeholders critical to the project 's long-term success (4 points).

(4) The plan for closing charter schools supported, overseen, or managed by the applicant that do not meet high standards of quality (2 points).

(5) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, chief executive officer or organization leader, and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project (6 points).

General:

The proposed management plan is adequate and will achieve the objectives on time and within budget. T The responsibilities of the CMO are split between the two (central office & instruction).

AF plans to open approximately 3 new schools annually and will continue to grow current schools to scale. AF has experience working with multiple authorizers across three states and has demonstrated capacity across the three states. The CSP proposed budget is approximately \$8.5 mill for 5 years. The budget developed is based on the individual budgets for each school and AF Network support. [e53]

AF itself does not receive the charters to establish charter schools. New charters for the planned replication and revisions for the established schools have not yet been approved.

Reader's Score: 17

Sub Question

1. Quality of the Management Plan - Part 1

(1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks (4 points).

Strengths:

The proposed management plan is adequate and will achieve the objectives on time and within budget. The expansion and replication will be lead by the AF Executive Team, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] co-CEOs of AF. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] founders of AF, have extensive experience (as delineated by their included resumes) in leading AF and overseeing the continued expansion of the organization. The responsibilities of the CMO are split between the two (central office & instruction).

AF plans to open approximately 3 new schools annually and will continue to grow current schools to scale. AF has experience working with multiple authorizers across three states and has demonstrated capacity across the three states. The CSP proposed budget is approximately \$8.5 mill for 5 years. The budget developed is based on the individual budgets for each school and AF Network support. [e53]

The application includes the AF fee of 10% of school revenue for its support. The fee is applied to each school under its management so as to financially support the centralized office.

Roles and responsibilities are clearly laid out and the Board is part of the description. [e55] The majority of the roles and responsibilities are those of the CMO. The Board of Directors of each school will assist AF in opening and growing the proposed schools as they have complementary skill sets that AF will utilize [e54].

The timelines and milestone provided correspond to the stated goals & objectives [table, e8-59]. For example, there will be twice annual reviews of the overall 5-year plan viability and checks are in place to 'greenlight' the on-going process of school planning/opening.

Weaknesses:

AF itself does not receive the charters to establish charter schools. Individual boards of trustees of the schools are the entities that apply for and are awarded school charters. Within the application, the CMO is overarching and the detailed relationship with each school's board of trustees is not clearly delineated. For example, when and how AF reports to the boards isn't specified. There is not a clear description of the contract/service agreement between AF and boards.

The charters for expansion have yet to be received. The application has broad assumption that 15 additional charters will be received and current charters will be revised to allow for continued expansion without a challenge by the appropriate authorizer.

Reader's Score:

2. Quality of the Management Plan - Part 2

(2) The business plan for improving, sustaining, and ensuring the quality and performance of charter schools created or substantially expanded under these grants beyond the initial period of Federal funding in areas including, but not limited to, facilities, financial management, central office, student academic achievement, governance, oversight, and human resources of the charter

Sub Question

schools (4 points).

Strengths:

The business plan for improving, sustaining, and ensuring the quality and performance of the schools created and expanded under the grant and beyond is adequate. In addition to the business plan, the Budget narrative describes Years 1-5 of the CSP grant specific to NY, CT, and RI. Based on its experience with growing its network, AF will be able to continue growth and support of its schools after the grant expires. It has the ability to manage state and federal funds received per school and has demonstrated past fundraising capacity.

The proposed budget is compliant to the restrictions of the grant. AF has existing controls in place to ensure that each school receives its allocated funds, i.e. a comprehensive fiscal control structure is in place for network and individual schools.

AF has a strong fundraising history and relationships with major foundations (especially in regards to facilities). [e61-e62] AF has received grants from the Buck Foundation, Robertson Foundation; Robin Hood Foundation; Charter school growth fund; Gates Foundation, Clark Foundation, and the Tiger Foundation.

AF has a strong fundraising history and relationships with major foundations (especially in regards to facilities). [e61-e62] AF has received grants from the Buck Foundation, Robertson Foundation; Robin Hood Foundation; Charter school growth fund; Gates Foundation, Clark Foundation, and the Tiger Foundation.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score:

3. Quality of the Management Plan - Part 3

(3) A multi-year financial and operating model for the organization, a demonstrated commitment of current and future partners, and evidence of broad support from stakeholders critical to the project 's long-term success (4 points).

Strengths:

The financial and operating model for the organization demonstrates commitment from current and future partners. Based on its experience with expanding its network, AF will be able to continue growth and support of schools after the grant expires based on its ability to manage state and federal funds received per school and its past fundraising capacity.

AF has a strong fundraising history and relationships with major foundations (especially in regards to facilities). [e61-e62] AF has received grants from the Buck Foundation, Robertson Foundation; Robin Hood Foundation; Charter school growth fund; Gates Foundation, Clark Foundation, and the Tiger Foundation.

In addition, the network has support from a range of stakeholders as evidenced by the letters of support provided in the application. The nine letters submitted include support from foundations, politicians, authorizers. AF is continuing its family and community outreach and a parent seat is reserved on each school board. [e69]

Weaknesses:

The application described the CMO responsibilities but the specifics of how it will continue to work and grown across the states in not detailed. There was no organizational chart provided.

Sub Question

Reader's Score:

4. Quality of the Management Plan - Part 4

(4) The plan for closing charter schools supported, overseen, or managed by the applicant that do not meet high standards of quality (2 points).

Strengths:

The application described a plan for underperforming schools which includes: replacing the principal and leadership team, teachers; changing aspects of curriculum; revamping the school culture; and pushing-in more by AF senior leadership. AF has not closed a school nor had a school closed by an authorizer.

Weaknesses:

The application states that AF would close a school if it's 'required by authorized public chartering agency' to close it. [e70] Is it not stated that the CMO would close a school of its own volition if it deemed a school chronically underperforming, even after intensive interventions.

Reader's Score:

5. Quality of the Management Plan - Part 5

(5) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, chief executive officer or organization leader, and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project (6 points).

Strengths:

The work of replication and expansion is a continuation of growth of AF. Qualified staff are in place and currently doing the work of running the network. The expansion and replication will be led by the AF Executive Team, [REDACTED] co-CEOs of AF. [REDACTED] founders of AF, have extensive experience (as delineated by their included resumes) in leading AF and overseeing the continued expansion of the organization. The responsibilities of the CMO are split between the two (central office & instruction). The Executive Team is supported by a Chief External Officer, Chief Financial & Strategy Officer and a Chief Operations Officer.

The Project Director for the CSP grant is [REDACTED] Associate Director of Development. Her qualifications are detailed in the resume provided in the application.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score:

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project.

Strengths:

The Project Director will be responsible for evaluating the quality of the program. [e77] AF will also partner with 3rd party organizations to develop evaluation tools (e.g. TNTP for teacher evaluations) for the ongoing organizational quality (separate from and in addition to the CSP grant).

Some of the measures to be used for the project evaluation will include:

- performance on state tests
- AF school report card (for each school)
- AF support report card
- AF organizational-wide report card

The application adequately describes the design of the proposed project. It provided tables that are detailed by Objectives and subcategories. The goals, objectives and outcomes are clearly specified, measurable and attainable.

The application Project Goals are:

- Quality: grow by 5,000 students
- Scale: prove achievement gap can be closed at a district scale

The Outcomes are also clearly provided [Table are provided, e17, e51-e52]:

- 1) The growth of the network will be over 14,000 students in 42 schools. This is the equivalent of a school district. AF will open on average 3 schools per year. [chart on pages e26-7]
- 2) AF will close the achievement gap for educationally disadvantaged students
- 3) For AF students, 100% will achieve 4-year college acceptance rates; 95% college matriculation for graduating seniors; and 75% 6-yr college persistence rate
- 4) AF will have 96% student attendance rate; 90% student retention rate; 75% new teacher offer acceptance rate; 80% teacher & principal retention rate, and waitlist students of at least 100% of enrollment targets
- 5) AF will operate w/in sustainable budget

Weaknesses:

There will not be an outside evaluator for this grant.

Reader's Score: 9

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Serving High-Need Students

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1: Serving High-Need Students (0, 1, 4, or 5 points)

This priority is for projects that will serve high-need students through one of the methods described below. An application may receive priority points for only one element of Competitive Preference Priority 1. Therefore, an applicant should address only one element of Competitive Preference Priority 1 and must specify which element (i.e., (a), (b) or (c)) it is addressing. If an applicant addresses more than one element of Competitive Preference Priority 1 and does not specify whether it is addressing element (a), (b), or (c), the application will be awarded priority points only for the element addressed in the application that has the highest maximum point value, regardless of the number of priority points the application is awarded for that particular element of Competitive Preference Priority 1.

This priority is for projects that will serve high-need students through element (a), (b) or (c) as described below:

(a) Supporting Students who are Members of Federally Recognized Indian Tribes. (0 or 5 points)

To meet this priority, an application must demonstrate that the proposed project is designed to improve academic outcomes or learning environments, or both, for students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes.

Note: Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate how the proposed project is designed to serve students

who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes through a variety of means, such as creating or expanding charter schools in geographic areas with large numbers of students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes, conducting targeted outreach and recruitment, or including in the charters or performance contracts for the charter schools funded under the project specific performance goals for students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes.

(b) School Improvement. (0 or 4 points)

To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that its proposed replication or expansion of one or more high-quality charter schools (as defined in this notice) will occur in partnership with, and will be designed to assist, one or more LEAs in implementing academic or structural interventions to serve students attending schools that have been identified for improvement, corrective action, closure, or restructuring under section 1116 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA), and as described in the notice of final requirements for School Improvement Grants, published in the Federal Register on October 28, 2010 (75 FR 66363).

Note: Applicants in States operating under ESEA Flexibility that have opted to waive the requirement in ESEA section 1116(b) for LEAs to identify for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, as appropriate, their Title I schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for two or more consecutive years may partner with LEAs to serve students attending priority or focus schools (see the Department's June 7, 2012 guidance entitled, "ESEA Flexibility", at www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility). The Secretary encourages such applicants to describe how their proposed projects would complement efforts to serve students attending priority or focus schools described in the State's approved request for waivers under ESEA Flexibility.

(c) Promise Zones. (0 or 1 point)

This priority is for projects that are designed to serve and coordinate with a federally designated Promise Zone.

Note: To view the list of designated Promise Zones and lead organizations please go to www.hud.gov/promisezones. The link to HUD Form 50153 (Certification of Consistency with Promise Zone Goals and Implementation), which has been cleared by the Office of Management and Budget under the Paperwork Reduction Act, is http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=HUD_Form_50153.pdf.

Strengths:

AF currently operates four schools in Upper Albany neighborhood in Hartford, CT, a designated Promise Zone.

It plans to open one new school within the zone to complete a cluster of five schools (two elementary schools, two middle schools, feeding into one high school).

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses observed.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority - Promoting Diversity

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Promoting Diversity (0 or 3 points)

This priority is for applicants that demonstrate a record of (in the schools they currently operate or manage), as well as an intent to continue (in schools that they will be creating or substantially expanding under this grant), taking active measures to--

(a) Promote student diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, or avoid racial isolation;

(b) Serve students with disabilities at a rate that is at least comparable to the rate at which these students are served in public schools in the surrounding area; and

(c) Serve English learners at a rate that is at least comparable to the rate at which these students are served in public schools in the surrounding area.

In support of this priority, applicants must provide enrollment data as well as descriptions of existing policies and activities undertaken or planned to be undertaken.

Note 1: An applicant addressing Competitive Preference Priority 2--Promoting Diversity is invited to discuss how the proposed design of its project will encourage approaches by charter schools that help bring together students of different backgrounds, including students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, to attain the benefits that flow from a diverse student body. The applicant should discuss in its application how it would ensure that those approaches are permissible under current law.

Note 2: For information on permissible ways to meet this priority, please refer to the joint guidance issued by the Department's Office for Civil Rights and the U.S. Department of Justice entitled, "Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity and Avoid Racial Isolation in Elementary and Secondary Schools" (www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/guidance-ese-201111.pdf) and "Schools' Civil Rights Obligations to English Learner Students and Limited English Proficient Parents" (www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ellresources.html).

Strengths:

AF is a growing network of public charter schools in Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven, CT and Brooklyn, NY and Providence, RI. Across the network, the vast majority of students being served are minority students and come from low-income homes.

In NY, AF gives preference for low-income, ELL and SWD in school lotteries. In CT, schools are purposefully located in catchment areas that are high-need and underserved. In RI, AF is working with the USDOE to give preference for FRL, ELL, SWD.

AF is actively recruiting to for ELLs & SWD students. It is also actively recruiting diverse staff to reflect the student populations being served and as such are recruiting from historically black colleges and universities. [e13]

In addition, it has established community groups in NY and CT to support staff; namely a First Generation College and People of Color, and a community groups for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Questioning have been set up. [e14]

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses observed.

Reader's Score: 3

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Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Replication & Expansion - 2: 84.282M

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Achievement First, Inc. (U282M150005)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Eligible Applicant

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(2) Either

(i) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, 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) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant, or

(ii) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which there have not been significant achievement gaps between any of the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant and to which significant gains in student academic achievement have been made with all populations of students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (15 points).

(3) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has achieved results (including performance on statewide tests, annual student attendance and retention rates, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates where applicable and available) for low-income and other educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant that are significantly above the average academic achievement results for such students in the State (15 points).

General:

AF is a quality applicant as it shows strong results closing the achievement gap and detail in terms of subgroups and how they use data to inform ongoing improvement.

Reader's Score: 46

Sub Question

1. Quality of the Eligible Applicant - Part 1

(1) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement and attainment for all students, including, as applicable, educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (20 points).

Strengths:

AF is rooted in a strong theory of change with measurable results from the last three years. The results are strong when compared to peers, and part of their drop was due to the CCSS and assessment transition. The depth of their data and documented responses to what the data says is shown throughout the application. (e27, e33) Examples of this include the change to college ready curriculum and emphasis on culture (e37)

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

The drop in New York test scores in the first year of CCSS (page e28) is a weakness here. There are also many schools and students who do not require testing because they serve many elementary schools and the CT participation in the Smarter/Balanced assessment consortium. The data is partially diluted because of this. Assessment data doesn't delineate between math and ELA (appendix F).

Reader's Score:

2. Quality of the Eligible Applicant - Part 2

(2) Either

(i) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, 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) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant, or

(ii) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which there have not been significant achievement gaps between any of the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant and to which significant gains in student academic achievement have been made with all populations of students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (15 points).

Strengths:

AF's demographics are predicated on low income communities which this grant is designed to serve. 98% black and Hispanic (e36) showing significant improvements in testing as compared to peers. This is echoed in low income students (85% of population) and ELL students (e37).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score:

3. Quality of the Eligible Applicant - Part 3

(3) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has achieved results (including performance on statewide tests, annual student attendance and retention rates, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates where applicable and available) for low-income and other educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant that are significantly above the average academic achievement results for such students in the State (15 points).

Strengths:

The population fits the target for this as evidenced in element 2. The results of testing are significant when compared to peers as described in element 1 and 2. Parent engagement is effectively detailed including the compact and attendance rates are over 97%, which is outstanding (e40).

Weaknesses:

The retention rate of 92% could be slightly better, especially with such high attendance. Counseling out may not be effective for retention. (e41) It is encouraging that most schools seem to have an increasing trend here. Lots of reasons listed for excused withdrawals that are not included in retention data, and data "takes credit" for students who graduate outside of Achievement First. (e41-42).

Reader's Score:

Selection Criteria - Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students

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. When responding to this selection criterion, applicants must discuss the proposed locations of schools to be created or substantially expanded and the student populations to be served.**

Note: The Secretary encourages applicants to describe their prior success in improving educational achievement and outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and English learners. In addition, the Secretary encourages applicants to address how they will ensure that all eligible students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education and how the proposed project will assist educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and English learners, in mastering State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.

Strengths:

The clear low income and minority demographics as detailed in Section A, will be replicated in other communities which strongly match these criteria. This is a part of the stated mission, theory of change (e44) and the cluster approach in target communities (e45-47). The inclusion model is well planned and in accordance with regulation.

Weaknesses:

Few specifics on support for ELL students.

Reader's Score: 9

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 extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified, measurable, and attainable. Applicants proposing to open schools serving substantially different populations than those currently served by the model for which they have demonstrated evidence of success must address the attainability of outcomes given this difference.**

Strengths:

The cluster model is strong as it creates an entire educational path for students K-12 in target communities (e45) and scales reasonably. Measured growth and performance against peers is measurable and the track record of improvement and results in section A shows promise.

Weaknesses:

There is little evidence of college persistence and success but it is attainable. (e52) Charters for some expansion sites have yet to be received, and applicant states some challenges with working with multiple state agencies and operators concurrently.

Reader's Score: 9

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. **(Note: Please provide your detailed comments for each of the following factors in the Quality of the Management Plan Sub-Questions.)**

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel to replicate and substantially expand high-quality charter schools (as defined in this notice). In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers-

(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 (4 points).

(2) The business plan for improving, sustaining, and ensuring the quality and performance of charter schools created or substantially expanded under these grants beyond the initial period of Federal funding in areas including, but not limited to, facilities, financial management, central office, student academic achievement, governance, oversight, and human resources of the charter schools (4 points).

(3) A multi-year financial and operating model for the organization, a demonstrated commitment of current and future partners, and evidence of broad support from stakeholders critical to the project 's long-term success (4 points).

(4) The plan for closing charter schools supported, overseen, or managed by the applicant that do not meet high standards of quality (2 points).

(5) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, chief executive officer or organization leader, and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project (6 points).

General:

Qualified executive team with experience in expanding this network (e53-54). The school by school budgets help budget tracking with separate budget for support systems. There is a clear division of responsibilities required for expansion and replication. This includes both internal and external benchmarks and balances.

Reader's Score: 18

Sub Question

1. Quality of the Management Plan - Part 1

(1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks (4 points).

Strengths:

Qualified executive team with experience in expanding this network (e53-54). The school by school budgets help budget tracking with separate budget for support systems. There is a clear division of responsibilities required for expansion and replication. This includes both internal and external benchmarks and balances.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score:

2. Quality of the Management Plan - Part 2

(2) The business plan for improving, sustaining, and ensuring the quality and performance of charter schools created or substantially expanded under these grants beyond the initial period of Federal funding in areas including, but not limited to, facilities, financial management, central office, student academic achievement, governance, oversight, and human resources of the charter schools (4 points).

Strengths:

The chart on e60 documents solid work streams and capacity.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score:

3. Quality of the Management Plan - Part 3

Sub Question

(3) A multi-year financial and operating model for the organization, a demonstrated commitment of current and future partners, and evidence of broad support from stakeholders critical to the project 's long-term success (4 points).

Strengths:

The financial and operating models are detailed and feasible (Appendix G). It also shows the previous experience in replication. The strong relationship with foundations also shows sustainability and broad support. (e61-62) The model has worked for 16 years and for 29 schools.

Weaknesses:

Efforts are still needed in Connecticut to close the funding gap for some schools. (e63)

Reader's Score:

4. Quality of the Management Plan - Part 4

(4) The plan for closing charter schools supported, overseen, or managed by the applicant that do not meet high standards of quality (2 points).

Strengths:

AF's procedures for closing are clearly documented (e70)

Weaknesses:

No evidence AF has had to close a charter school.

Reader's Score:

5. Quality of the Management Plan - Part 5

(5) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, chief executive officer or organization leader, and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project (6 points).

Strengths:

Executive team is qualified for this continued expansion and replication with relevant experience.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score:

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project.

Strengths:

Evaluation is clearly related and directly aligned to goals. Measurements proposed by the applicant is clear and feasible with external partners and auditors (e77). Data management systems are growing to support this need.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions**Competitive Preference Priority - Serving High-Need Students****1. Competitive Preference Priority 1: Serving High-Need Students (0, 1, 4, or 5 points)**

This priority is for projects that will serve high-need students through one of the methods described below. An application may receive priority points for only one element of Competitive Preference Priority 1. Therefore, an applicant should address only one element of Competitive Preference Priority 1 and must specify which element (i.e., (a), (b) or (c)) it is addressing. If an applicant addresses more than one element of Competitive Preference Priority 1 and does not specify whether it is addressing element (a), (b), or (c), the application will be awarded priority points only for the element addressed in the application that has the highest maximum point value, regardless of the number of priority points the application is awarded for that particular element of Competitive Preference Priority 1.

This priority is for projects that will serve high-need students through element (a), (b) or (c) as described below:

(a) Supporting Students who are Members of Federally Recognized Indian Tribes. (0 or 5 points)

To meet this priority, an application must demonstrate that the proposed project is designed to improve academic outcomes or learning environments, or both, for students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes.

Note: Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate how the proposed project is designed to serve students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes through a variety of means, such as creating or expanding charter schools in geographic areas with large numbers of students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes, conducting targeted outreach and recruitment, or including in the charters or performance contracts for the charter schools funded under the project specific performance goals for students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes.

(b) School Improvement. (0 or 4 points)

To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that its proposed replication or expansion of one or more high-quality charter schools (as defined in this notice) will occur in partnership with, and will be designed to assist, one or more LEAs in implementing academic or structural interventions to serve students attending schools that have been identified for improvement, corrective action, closure, or restructuring under section 1116 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA), and as described in the notice of final requirements for School Improvement Grants, published in the Federal Register on October 28, 2010 (75 FR 66363).

Note: Applicants in States operating under ESEA Flexibility that have opted to waive the requirement in ESEA section 1116(b) for LEAs to identify for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, as appropriate, their Title I schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for two or more consecutive years may partner with LEAs to serve students attending priority or focus schools (see the Department's June 7, 2012 guidance entitled, "ESEA Flexibility", at www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility). The Secretary encourages such applicants to describe how their proposed projects would complement efforts to serve students attending priority or focus schools described in the State's approved request for waivers under ESEA Flexibility.

(c) Promise Zones. (0 or 1 point)

This priority is for projects that are designed to serve and coordinate with a federally designated Promise Zone.

Note: To view the list of designated Promise Zones and lead organizations please go to www.hud.gov/promisezones. The link to HUD Form 50153 (Certification of Consistency with Promise Zone Goals

and Implementation), which has been cleared by the Office of Management and Budget under the Paperwork Reduction Act, is http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=HUD_Form_50153.pdf.

Strengths:

One point for being located in a promise zone.

Weaknesses:

No points for Indian tribes or school improvement

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority - Promoting Diversity

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Promoting Diversity (0 or 3 points)

This priority is for applicants that demonstrate a record of (in the schools they currently operate or manage), as well as an intent to continue (in schools that they will be creating or substantially expanding under this grant), taking active measures to--

- (a) Promote student diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, or avoid racial isolation;
- (b) Serve students with disabilities at a rate that is at least comparable to the rate at which these students are served in public schools in the surrounding area; and
- (c) Serve English learners at a rate that is at least comparable to the rate at which these students are served in public schools in the surrounding area.

In support of this priority, applicants must provide enrollment data as well as descriptions of existing policies and activities undertaken or planned to be undertaken.

Note 1: An applicant addressing Competitive Preference Priority 2--Promoting Diversity is invited to discuss how the proposed design of its project will encourage approaches by charter schools that help bring together students of different backgrounds, including students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, to attain the benefits that flow from a diverse student body. The applicant should discuss in its application how it would ensure that those approaches are permissible under current law.

Note 2: For information on permissible ways to meet this priority, please refer to the joint guidance issued by the Department's Office for Civil Rights and the U.S. Department of Justice entitled, "Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity and Avoid Racial Isolation in Elementary and Secondary Schools" (www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/guidance-ese-201111.pdf) and "Schools' Civil Rights Obligations to English Learner Students and Limited English Proficient Parents" (www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ellresources.html).

Strengths:

Diversity promoted in mission and approach.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/27/2015 05:13 PM

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Replication & Expansion - 2: 84.282M

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Achievement First, Inc. (U282M150005)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Eligible Applicant

1. (Note: Please provide your detailed comments for each of the following factors in the Quality of the Eligible Applicant Sub-Questions.)

In determining the quality of the applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors--

(1) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement and attainment for all students, including, as applicable, educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (20 points).

(2) Either

(i) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, 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) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant, or

(ii) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which there have not been significant achievement gaps between any of the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant and to which significant gains in student academic achievement have been made with all populations of students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (15 points).

(3) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has achieved results (including performance on statewide tests, annual student attendance and retention rates, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates where applicable and available) for low-income and other educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant that are significantly above the average academic achievement results for such students in the State (15 points).

General:

Quality of Applicant:

Strengths

Applicant has met the criteria for Quality of Applicant by demonstrating a track record of success by the following:

- 1- Meeting Absolut Priority 1 of Experience of Operating or Managing High Quality Charter Schools and
- 2- Meeting Absolute Priority 2 of Serving a Low Demographic (as noted in Pg 3 of the abstract, 85% of the total population is classified as being from a low in come household.

The Quality of the Applicant is further noted starting at Pg 9 of the application.

- A. Applicant goes on to provide data proving demonstrated success in significantly increasing academic achievement and attainment for all students (Pg 9-17)
- B. Applicant goes further to convey demonstrated success in closing historic achievement gaps for subgroups of students. The results were as follows:
 - Minority students in Connecticut – an increase in testing scores of capstone grades of 4th, 8th, and 10th compared to minority grades in the state (Pg 18.)
 - Minority students in New York – an increase in testing scores of capstone grades 4th and 8th compared to minority grades in the state (Pg 18.)
 - Low Income Students in Connecticut – an increase in testing scores of capstone grades 4th, 8th, and 10th compared to low in come students in the state (pg 19)
 - Low Income students in New York – an increase in testing scores of capstone grades of 4th and 8th compared to

low income students in the state.

- ELL Students – Reviewer noted that each AF district does not have a comparable rate to surrounding districts of ELL students. Also, according to NY law, the NYSE does not publish data for groups (Pg 20) with what data is available, AF has shown an increase in test scores of capstone grades on its Connecticut and NY campuses.
- Special Education Students: AF's Special Education Student population is on par with the surrounding public school population. AF's Special Education Student population has outperformed the surrounding public schools Special Education Student population in the capstone grades with the exception of its 8th grade Connecticut campus(Pg20) (please see weaknesses for Part 1)

Reader's Score: 49

Sub Question

1. Quality of the Eligible Applicant - Part 1

(1) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement and attainment for all students, including, as applicable, educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (20 points).

Strengths:

Applicant has met the criteria for Eligible Applicant with consistency over the past three years where they have in fact demonstrated success in significantly increasing student's academic achievement. (Pg 17-22)

Weaknesses:

However, it was noted that applicant Special Education Students of its capstone grade of 8th grade did not outperform other Special Education Students in the state. They actually fell behind by 2%. (pg 20)

Reader's Score:

2. Quality of the Eligible Applicant - Part 2

(2) Either

(i) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, 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) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant, or

(ii) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which there have not been significant achievement gaps between any of the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant and to which significant gains in student academic achievement have been made with all populations of students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (15 points).

Strengths:

Applicant has met criteria for Eligible Applicant P2. Consistency has been shown with demonstrating success in closing historic achievement gaps in subgroups. (Pg 10-20)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score:

3. Quality of the Eligible Applicant - Part 3

(3) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has achieved results (including performance on statewide tests, annual student attendance and retention rates, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates where applicable and available) for low-income and other educationally disadvantaged

Sub Question

students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant that are significantly above the average academic achievement results for such students in the State (15 points).

Strengths:

Applicant has met criteria for Eligible Applicant P3 (Pg 17-26)

Applicant also has 100% of graduating seniors accepted into a four year college. (Pg 25)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted

Reader's Score:

Selection Criteria - Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students

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. When responding to this selection criterion, applicants must discuss the proposed locations of schools to be created or substantially expanded and the student populations to be served.

Note: The Secretary encourages applicants to describe their prior success in improving educational achievement and outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and English learners. In addition, the Secretary encourages applicants to address how they will ensure that all eligible students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education and how the proposed project will assist educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and English learners, in mastering State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.

Strengths:

Applicant does display proof of assisting Educationally Disadvantaged students, starting on Pg 26. Applicant also delves further into depth of discussion by addressing six core elements as to how they assist these students (Pg 26-29) As well as adhering to state laws of nondiscrimination. Since applicant does operate in three different states, the applicant does have different rules and regulations to adhere to.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted

Reader's Score: 10

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 extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified, measurable, and attainable. Applicants proposing to open schools serving substantially different populations than those currently served by the model for which they have demonstrated evidence of success must address the attainability of outcomes given this difference.

Strengths:

Project Design:

Applicant conveys project design thoroughly and concisely starting on Pg 32. Applicant states 2 goals followed by 5 objectives (Pg 33-34)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. (Note: Please provide your detailed comments for each of the following factors in the Quality of the Management Plan Sub-Questions.)

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel to replicate and substantially expand high-quality charter schools (as defined in this notice). In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers-

(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 (4 points).

(2) The business plan for improving, sustaining, and ensuring the quality and performance of charter schools created or substantially expanded under these grants beyond the initial period of Federal funding in areas including, but not limited to, facilities, financial management, central office, student academic achievement, governance, oversight, and human resources of the charter schools (4 points).

(3) A multi-year financial and operating model for the organization, a demonstrated commitment of current and future partners, and evidence of broad support from stakeholders critical to the project's long-term success (4 points).

(4) The plan for closing charter schools supported, overseen, or managed by the applicant that do not meet high standards of quality (2 points).

(5) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, chief executive officer or organization leader, and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project (6 points).

General:

Applicant has met the criteria of an adequate management plan according to MP 1,2,3,4. (Pg 34-56)

Management Plan:

Applicant states that the Executive Team (made up of fully competent administrators) will oversee the implementation of the program. Objectives are clearly defined and will serve as a blue print for the team members. All roles and responsibilities are conveyed as well as timelines and milestones, and school level growth planning (Pg 34-41)

Applicant conveys a precise business plan for improving, sustaining, and ensuring the quality of the performances of charter schools (Pg 41-42)

Applicant conveys a multiyear financial and operating model for the organization in addition to the long term support of 7 private grant making foundations (Pg 43-44)

Applicant also conveys controls to ensure schools receive allocated funding by sustaining the components of operation model currently in use (Pg 45-52) The components are as follows:

School structure

Relationship between schools and network

Relationship between schools and authorized public chartering agencies

School leadership planning

Student Recruitment (student lottery policy is also conveyed) and

Family and community involvement

Applicant also conveys the qualifications of the management in place. (Pg 52-56)

5 Administrators are currently in place with substantial experience to oversee the proposed program.

Reader's Score: 20

Sub Question

Sub Question

1. Quality of the Management Plan - Part 1

(1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks (4 points).

Strengths:

Applicant has met the criteria for QMPP1(Pg 34-39)
Please see overall comments.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score:

2. Quality of the Management Plan - Part 2

(2) The business plan for improving, sustaining, and ensuring the quality and performance of charter schools created or substantially expanded under these grants beyond the initial period of Federal funding in areas including, but not limited to, facilities, financial management, central office, student academic achievement, governance, oversight, and human resources of the charter schools (4 points).

Strengths:

Applicant has met the criteria of QMPP2.(Pg 41-43)
Please see overall comments.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score:

3. Quality of the Management Plan - Part 3

(3) A multi-year financial and operating model for the organization, a demonstrated commitment of current and future partners, and evidence of broad support from stakeholders critical to the project 's long-term success (4 points).

Strengths:

Applicant met the criteria of establishing a multiyear financial and operating model. (Pg 34-43 including Appendix G)
In addition, the applicant maintains long term support of private, grant making foundations. This speaks volumes in regards to how adequate the management truly is. (Pg 43)
This in itself speaks highly of the competence of the administration and board of directors.
Involvement from the Philanthropy Sector will also incorporate into the entities overall budget thus promoting a sustainable charter institution well after the grant period has expired.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score:

4. Quality of the Management Plan - Part 4

(4) The plan for closing charter schools supported, overseen, or managed by the applicant that do not meet high standards of quality (2 points).

Sub Question

Strengths:

Applicant has met the criteria for QMPP4- (Pg 52)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score:

5. Quality of the Management Plan - Part 5

(5) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, chief executive officer or organization leader, and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project (6 points).

Strengths:

Applicant has met the criteria for QMPP5- (Pg 52-55)

Members of management are more than qualified with an existing track record of success.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score:

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project.

Strengths:

Applicant has met criteria for adequate project evaluation with 2 existing goals and 4 benchmarks for assessments (Pg 57-59)

It is also noted that applicant works with multiple 3rd party evaluators instead of relying on internal control measures. Even though this may not be a state mandated protocol, this proves to be a safeguard as well as a method of transparency.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Serving High-Need Students

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1: Serving High-Need Students (0, 1, 4, or 5 points)

This priority is for projects that will serve high-need students through one of the methods described below. An application may receive priority points for only one element of Competitive Preference Priority 1. Therefore, an applicant should address only one element of Competitive Preference Priority 1 and must specify which element (i.e., (a), (b) or (c)) it is addressing. If an applicant addresses more than one element of Competitive Preference Priority 1 and does not specify whether it is addressing element (a), (b), or (c), the application will be awarded priority points only for the element addressed in the

application that has the highest maximum point value, regardless of the number of priority points the application is awarded for that particular element of Competitive Preference Priority 1.

This priority is for projects that will serve high-need students through element (a), (b) or (c) as described below:

(a) Supporting Students who are Members of Federally Recognized Indian Tribes. (0 or 5 points)

To meet this priority, an application must demonstrate that the proposed project is designed to improve academic outcomes or learning environments, or both, for students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes.

Note: Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate how the proposed project is designed to serve students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes through a variety of means, such as creating or expanding charter schools in geographic areas with large numbers of students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes, conducting targeted outreach and recruitment, or including in the charters or performance contracts for the charter schools funded under the project specific performance goals for students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes.

(b) School Improvement. (0 or 4 points)

To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that its proposed replication or expansion of one or more high-quality charter schools (as defined in this notice) will occur in partnership with, and will be designed to assist, one or more LEAs in implementing academic or structural interventions to serve students attending schools that have been identified for improvement, corrective action, closure, or restructuring under section 1116 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA), and as described in the notice of final requirements for School Improvement Grants, published in the Federal Register on October 28, 2010 (75 FR 66363).

Note: Applicants in States operating under ESEA Flexibility that have opted to waive the requirement in ESEA section 1116(b) for LEAs to identify for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, as appropriate, their Title I schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for two or more consecutive years may partner with LEAs to serve students attending priority or focus schools (see the Department's June 7, 2012 guidance entitled, "ESEA Flexibility", at www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility). The Secretary encourages such applicants to describe how their proposed projects would complement efforts to serve students attending priority or focus schools described in the State's approved request for waivers under ESEA Flexibility.

(c) Promise Zones. (0 or 1 point)

This priority is for projects that are designed to serve and coordinate with a federally designated Promise Zone.

Note: To view the list of designated Promise Zones and lead organizations please go to www.hud.gov/promisezones. The link to HUD Form 50153 (Certification of Consistency with Promise Zone Goals and Implementation), which has been cleared by the Office of Management and Budget under the Paperwork Reduction Act, is http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=HUD_Form_50153.pdf.

Strengths:

Applicant meets CPP1(c) and if awarded the grant funds, will have a total of 5 schools within a federally designated Promise Zone.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority - Promoting Diversity

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Promoting Diversity (0 or 3 points)

This priority is for applicants that demonstrate a record of (in the schools they currently operate or manage), as well as an intent to continue (in schools that they will be creating or substantially expanding under this grant), taking active measures to--

- (a) Promote student diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, or avoid racial isolation;
- (b) Serve students with disabilities at a rate that is at least comparable to the rate at which these students are served in public schools in the surrounding area; and
- (c) Serve English learners at a rate that is at least comparable to the rate at which these students are served in public schools in the surrounding area.

In support of this priority, applicants must provide enrollment data as well as descriptions of existing policies and activities undertaken or planned to be undertaken.

Note 1: An applicant addressing Competitive Preference Priority 2--Promoting Diversity is invited to discuss how the proposed design of its project will encourage approaches by charter schools that help bring together students of different backgrounds, including students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, to attain the benefits that flow from a diverse student body. The applicant should discuss in its application how it would ensure that those approaches are permissible under current law.

Note 2: For information on permissible ways to meet this priority, please refer to the joint guidance issued by the Department s Office for Civil Rights and the U.S. Department of Justice entitled, "Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity and Avoid Racial Isolation in Elementary and Secondary Schools" (www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/guidance-ese-201111.pdf) and "Schools' Civil Rights Obligations to English Learner Students and Limited English Proficient Parents" (www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ellresources.html).

Strengths:

Applicant meets criteria for CPP2 (a,b,c)Applicant shows an established track record of actively promoting student diversity, serving students with disabilities, and English learners at a rate comparable to surrounding public school areas. (Pg 4-6)

AF also conveys that they take additional measures to promote student diversity by building relationships with various community venues including daycares, community centers, and churches. They also provide Spanish speaking printed materials to the community as well as when state law permits, preference in enrollment lotteries for EL Students. AF provides additional policies regarding their lottery policies in Section VII Selection Criteria D. (Pg 50)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 3

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