

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

# Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - Replication & Expansion - 4: 84.282M

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

Applicant: Mastery Charter High School (U282M150038)

## 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:

Applicant presents the results of external studies that suggest stellar performance. It's clear that the applicant has a strong track record of serving as a turnaround operator and radically changing the trajectory of the schools it manages. PSSA results (2014 compared to 2011 or the year a school opened, if it was more recent) indicate that the applicant has increased student achievement dramatically (p. 11, 14, and 16). Major areas of concern include the performance of the applicant's SWD population and the lack of multi-year data for subgroups.

Reader's Score: 45

#### 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:

According to a study by the Parthenon Group, applicant has been the strongest turnaround performer in terms of proficiency growth rates in reading and math (p. 1). Another study found that 100% of Mastery schools were trending in the right direction and poised for "substantial achievement or closing the achievement gap" (p. 1). These objective reports demonstrate that Mastery has a strong track record of success in the very challenging world of turnaround work.

When compared to district and State performance data, applicant has consistently increased achievement for its students (p. 9) when compared to pre-Mastery management. The graphs on pages 11, 14, and 16 indicate that the applicant's schools have increased student achievement from 2011 (or the year of opening) to 2014 ("To measure our progress over the last three years, we use 2011 as the baseline scores and look at the growth and performance of each school through 2014. If a school opened later than 2011, we use the baseline year of school opening for the growth and achievement metric comparison." p. 9). These graphs indicate that the applicant has vaulted its students much closer to the State average (or even above in select instances) in three years of less.

### 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:

Applicant's growth and exceptional performance when compared to pre-Mastery control of the respective schools, along with the applicant's predominantly low-income, Black student population, suggest that Mastery is closing the income and Black-White achievement gaps (p. 13-15). The "Percent of State Proficiency" graphs are particularly helpful in assessing the extent to which Mastery students are closing State-wide achievement gaps.

Applicant has experienced similar success with EL population (p. 15) and SWD population (p. 16).

### 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).**

## Sub Question

### Strengths:

In many instances at the individual school level (Appendix F), applicant demonstrates success in having its students outperform State averages, particularly at the subgroup level. Applicant indicates that its low-income students outperformed State average for low-income students in 2014 (p. 13), and the same goes for Mastery's EL population (p. 17). Particularly for Mastery's EL population, often these results are impressive and further demonstrate that the applicant has significantly enhanced student achievement for educationally disadvantaged students.

### Weaknesses:

Applicant does not provide multi-year data to compare its students (in the aggregate) at the subgroup level to respective State averages. Though the graphs on pages 11, 14, and 16 reflect multi-year data (based on the year a school opened), those appear to be comparisons to "all students" State average, rather than respective subgroups at the State-level.

### 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 already has approved charters for Fall 2015 (91% low-income) and Fall 2016 (second lowest income area of Philadelphia) (p. 2).

Applicant has a strong track record of improving achievement for educationally disadvantaged students when compared to pre-Mastery control performance at its respective schools. In that way, the applicant is doing a commendable job of ensuring students are mastering State content.

Applicant has strong student and family communication and recruitment plan for its turnaround efforts (p. 25).

### Weaknesses:

The applicant's explanation of how it serves EL students (p. 24-25) is rather short on details. Though they have had small populations of EL students in Philadelphia, as they expand, that may not be the case, so it would have been beneficial to see a more robust description of how Mastery would meet those students' needs.

### 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:**

Applicant demonstrates a strong history of replicating its model and opening new turnaround schools over the last 10+ years. Those efforts will lay the groundwork for this ambitious replication and expansion effort.

The goals, objectives, and measures (p. 29-32) are clearly defined, measurable, diverse in scope, and both ambitious and attainable.

#### **Weaknesses:**

Given that applicant notes that new schools will have higher EL populations than Mastery currently serves, based on the criterion language, the applicant should have addressed how it will prepare for this difference to ensure the success of this student population.

### 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 proposes to continue what appears to be a strong management model that emphasizes necessary autonomy at the school-level while providing critical supports from network operations. This plan is generally clearly defined, deliberate, and well-structured. Applicant has assembled a strong team to execute the proposed project, and one that is full of people who have successfully executed prior R&E efforts and/or achieved impressive results in the charter school and turnaround worlds.

Notable concerns include a financial model that appears to project sizeable holes beyond CSP funding during the proposed project. Applicant does not explain how it will cover these significant gaps (e.g., more than \$8mm in Year 3 of the project). Additionally, applicant does not provide adequate detail regarding its plan for closing underperforming schools.

**Reader's Score:** 16

**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 demonstrated record of success in faithfully replicating its high-quality model on-time and on-budget, based on CMO replication and expansion efforts funded by CSP from 2010-2015.

The table on p. 41-44 clearly delineates the objectives, measures, responsible parties, and timeframe for this ambitious replication effort. If implemented successfully, this plan will ensure that the project is completed on-time.

**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 demonstrates a strong history of executing a similar scale project in a similar amount of time (2010-2015 CSP R&E project), which seems to have been supported by the strong network operations that the applicant proposes to utilize for this project. The CMO operations are focused on freeing school-based leaders and instructional leaders to focus on student achievement (p. 45 "We believe the top priority for every school leader should be improving instructional quality to impact student outcomes."), which is both efficient and necessary given the challenges associated with turnaround operations.

Applicant has a robust governance structure as is, and has already thought through the governance challenges associated with opening schools in new States (p. 47-49).

Applicant proposes to have its schools financially sustainable after only two years (p. 45), which is ambitious to say the least, but realistic given Mastery's replication history (14 schools in last five years).

## Sub Question

### 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 demonstrates strong support from critical partners in its proposed replication efforts. LEAs in expansion areas appear to be poised to support Mastery, and applicant demonstrates strong support from parents.

### Weaknesses:

Financial model (p. 50) identifies sizeable gaps in funding needed for CMO operations and school-based replication efforts after CSP funding, including a gap of more than \$8 million in Year 3 of the project. Applicant does not explicitly explain how it will overcome these gaps, though increasing local school revenues may provide the cushion needed. Still, without an explanation or a financial model that includes all costs associated with operating all Mastery schools during this time period, it's difficult to determine if those local school revenues will cover these gaps.

### 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:

No strengths noted.

### Weaknesses:

Applicant merely expresses an intention to close its schools that are not performing well. Applicant does not provide detail on how that closure will actually happen and/or how any closure plan it enacts will align with State/district policies, laws, etc.

### 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 assembled an impressive team to lead this proposed project (p. 53-55), including many individuals who were either at Mastery during or heavily involved in the applicant's previous CSP R&E efforts (e.g., Chief Innovation Officer). The team is functionally diverse in its composition, of particular note being the involvement of the Director of Specialized Services. Given the scope and location of the proposed project, having that position heavily involved in the project will ensure that Mastery meets the needs of its SWD populations across State lines. Much of the key personnel team have impressive backgrounds, including experience with Teach For America, the Broad

**Sub Question**

Residency, and local school reform efforts.

**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:**

Proposed evaluation is ongoing, tied to project plans, and relevant. Applicant proposes an evaluation plan that will regularly keep Mastery decision-makers informed about the project's success, rather than an end-of-project assessment, or on an annual basis. The proposed evaluation builds on the applicant's already robust approach to data collection and analysis for purposes of improving instruction and student achievement. In particular, the applicant's project growth models and other sophisticated data practices ensure that this project will be continuously and rigorously assessed.

The proposed external evaluator, though not selected, is a strong element of this criterion, particularly given the applicant's plan to have the evaluator compare Mastery to other CMOs, district, and States. The latter two are inherently important given the nature of this CSP program's criteria, but the comparison to other CMOs represents another layer to the applicant's desire to provide excellent opportunities for its students. It's also noteworthy that the external evaluator will focus on more than just student performance (p. 57). By evaluating Mastery's operational performance associated with its R&E efforts, the evaluator will help Mastery improve its ability to support schools.

**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](http://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](http://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](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=HUD_Form_50153.pdf).

**Strengths:**

Applicant has a strong history of partnering with School District of Philadelphia for its turnaround efforts, a relationship that will continue under this project. Additionally, applicant has established and executed partnering relationships with LEAs in New Jersey, and has been recruited to support turnaround efforts in Delaware and DC (p. 3)

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 4**

**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](http://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](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ellresources.html)).

**Strengths:**

Though applicant's schools are located in generally racially isolated areas, applicant demonstrates proactive steps to counteract this isolation: "cultural context" PD and programming (p. 4) and exposure programming (p. 5).

SWD population is higher than district averages (p. 5). Regarding EL population, applicant notes that its enrollment rate is higher than the surrounding schools, though lower than the district (p. 6).

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:** 3

---

**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 08/28/2015 02:31 PM

# Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - Replication & Expansion - 4: 84.282M

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

Applicant: Mastery Charter High School (U282M150038)

## 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:

Overall, Mastery's student performance is impressive and well-documented. Some data is inconsistent or unavailable, but for the scores provided, Mastery shows significant positive gains in closing the achievement gap.

Reader's Score: 43

#### 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:

All of the Mastery schools have consistently achieved improvement in both math and reading (p 8) and each of the Mastery schools has improved upon results from Year 1 (p 8). This clearly demonstrates that despite students beginning at Mastery an average of 2 years below grade level that they are able to catch up and as the students are in Mastery longer, their performance increases.

## Sub Question

### Weaknesses:

Two of Mastery's schools did not improved reading scores in comparison to the Pennsylvania state baseline over the same period, with one school holding steady and one school declining in performance (p 9).

Three (of 12 or 25%) Mastery schools failed to make progress in closing the math achievement gap (p 9).

Based upon the graphs on page 11, it appears as though Mastery's percent of state proficiency scores are decreasing at a different rate than the state averages.

### 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:

All of Mastery's schools are in the top 45% of all public and public charter schools in Philadelphia for the School Performance Profile (p 11), and 7 of 12 performing in the top 25% (p 11). The growth and performance of Mastery students as compared to the schools pre-turnaround is particularly impressive, and the data presented on pages 15-16 corroborates this.

### Weaknesses:

The performance across Mastery schools is inconsistent, with some schools performing extremely well and earning designations while others do not (p 12). There are also inconsistencies between performance of ELs and students with disabilities.

### 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:

Mastery students have demonstrated through both performance test metrics and alternative metrics of student success, such as graduation rates, that they are consistently outperforming peers in Philadelphia. Graduation rates have steadily increased over the past three years, and all high schools experienced their highest graduation rates in 2014 (p 18), indicating that Mastery's performance over time is increasing. All schools exceeded the high school graduation rate (70%) of Philadelphia Public Schools (p 18) and the percentage of Mastery students enrolling in college is almost double that of students who attend Philadelphia Public High schools (p 19).

Mastery low-income students, in aggregate, outperform their state peers by 12 and 7 points, in math and reading, respectively (p 13).

## Sub Question

### Weaknesses:

Mastery only provides aggregate student data for graduation rate, without breaking out educationally disadvantaged students. Further, student performance for ELLs and IEP students is only given for 2014, making it impossible to discern consistency over this period (p 14 and 16).

### 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:

Low-income students at Mastery demonstrate higher levels of proficiency in reading and math as compared to state averages for low-income students. The math scores in 2014 were 12 points higher and reading scores were 7 points higher as compared to their peers (p 13).

The lowest performing Mastery school had the highest student growth results for schools in the Philadelphia region in 2014 (p 13).

Mastery schools demonstrate improvement in test scores correlated to the amount of time the school has been in operation (p 14), showing that as students participate in the Mastery program, their scores improve.

Mastery has been recognized for its strength in teaching black students in the PennCAN list of Top 10 schools for black students (p 15).

Mastery created specific programs for students at the Gratz campus that were more appropriate to students' skill levels with plans to transition to their normal legacy programs once students reach an appropriate level (p 21)

### Weaknesses:

Mastery closed the reading achievement gap for black students in only half of their schools (p 15). Mastery students with IEPs experienced the same rate of performance decline as did statewide scores (p 16). Mastery serves a low number of ELLs and Hispanic students, making it difficult to draw conclusions about the success of their programs in instructing these students (p 16-17).

**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:**

Mastery presents modified performance measures for schools that start with significant (15%) achievement gaps (p 30) Mastery lays out five objectives with multiple levels of Performance Measures for each one, demonstrating a commitment to achieving the objectives and measuring them appropriately (p 30-33). The applicant is also implementing a new curriculum to support Common Core curriculum implantation (p 33), as well as additional supports for teachers' professional development (p 34) in a model called Mastery 3.0.

Mastery has an extensive professional development structure in place that includes one-on-one coaching and real time feedback on lessons (p 35) and teachers are compensated based on results, creating an incentive for high performing teachers to stay at Mastery (p 36).

Mastery is able to operate administrative functions, such HR, at scale by utilizing a network office, creating a more cost effective strategy than putting everything at the school level (p 35-36).

Mastery has transitioned to an RTI program in order to better support students (p 39).

**Weaknesses:**

The application fails to address how the program model will meet the needs of ELLs.

**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:**

Mastery has demonstrated prior success of opening schools on time and within budget, having opened 16 schools over 13 years, including opening 14 schools in 5 years with the support of a previous CSP grant. This experience, combined with more ambitious plans to scale evokes confidence that Mastery would steward this grant with similar care.

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:**

Mastery successfully used a previous CSP grant to open 14 schools in 5 years on time and on budget. Mastery notes having learned from this experience, so it is reasonable to assume that by combining a previously successful project plan with tweaks from having completed a project already, that Mastery will be successful again (p 40). The workplan includes applicable performance measures and milestones for each one, creating an easy to follow plan with several checks and specific people responsible for achieving the milestones.

**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:**

Mastery already has systems in place to scale, including a central office with "school level autonomies" (p 45). The central office is sustainable off of an 8.5% management fee from each school (p 45). Facilities & achievement have their own "Chiefs" in the national office, and almost all non-instructional functions are delegated to the network level, using their resources well.

**Weaknesses:**

For the time being, the network staff is not yet supported by the management fee (p 45).

**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:**

Mastery has dedicated systems and staff for managing nearly \$100 million budgets and \$2.5 million of Title funding (p 47). Fundraising and development is handled by a separate team, which was successful in raising \$55 million in 5 years (p 47). The forward-looking 5 year plan details outside fundraising necessary to support operations (p 50). Mastery also has a record of clean audits and financial statements (p 51).

**Weaknesses:**

The network support team continues to run a deficit as Mastery continues to expand (p 50) and Mastery runs a deficit through the five year plan.

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:**

Mastery has an internal plan for assisting failing schools and will withdraw charters if progress is not made in 3 years (p 52).

**Weaknesses:**

The school closure plan does not actually address how a school will be closed (p 52).

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 team that successfully scaled Mastery to the point it is at today will be in place to see the next phase of scale. Each has significant experience at Mastery and those relevant to their positions (p 53-55). The Project Director successfully managed a previously successful CSP grant (p 53).

**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:**

Mastery details both internal and external evaluation plans. The internal evaluation plan includes the tools developed by Mastery, demonstrating a rich understanding of capturing and using data, including a data warehouse, dashboard, and reports, analytics and predictive analysis (p 55). The metrics clearly trace back to the objectives described in earlier sections.

Mastery has budgeted \$400,000, an appropriate amount for hiring an external evaluator (p 57) with data collection that make sense given their project objectives (p 58).

**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](http://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](http://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](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=HUD_Form_50153.pdf).

**Strengths:**

Mastery demonstrates significant success in working with LEAs to turnaround failing charter schools. Of their current school portfolio, 13 of 17 schools are Restarts, and Mastery has already been approved for two additional turnaround charters in Philadelphia. Further, Mastery plans on expanding into areas in which there are a significant number of already-identified SIG schools (New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Washington, DC) (p 3).

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 4**

**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](http://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](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ellresources.html)).**

**Strengths:**

Despite working in racially isolated communities where years of racial segregation makes creating truly diverse schools difficult, Mastery has enacted policies to promote diversity as much as possible (p 4), and follows federal requirements in regards to policies to prevent racial isolation. These programs include student and staff training on "cultural context," and exposure programs to get students out of the classroom (p 4-5).

Mastery serves a higher percentage of students with IEPs than in surrounding school districts, demonstrating a commitment to instructing students with disabilities (p 5).

Mastery's ELL population outperforms the state averages for ELL students scoring advanced or proficient in reading and math (p 6).

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:** 3

---

**Status:** Submitted

**Last Updated:** 08/21/2015 10:57 PM

# Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - Replication & Expansion - 4: 84.282M

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

Applicant: Mastery Charter High School (U282M150038)

## 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:

Overall, the applicant demonstrates incredible academic achievement and growth with students, most of which are educationally disadvantaged, by turning around the most under-performing schools. Further, the data provided is comprehensive and tells a compelling story.

Reader's Score: 34

#### 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:

Because state tests have been changing between 2012 and 2014, the applicant contends the more accurate measure of student progress is the applicant's annual progress toward closing the proficiency gap with statewide averages (p. e35, e37), and short of student growth measures, this is a reasonable measurement of increases in student academic achievement. To this end, 11 out of 12 Mastery turnaround schools in Philadelphia continued to

## Sub Question

close the proficiency gap in reading and 10 out of 12 made progress in closing the gap in math over the past three years (p. e36-38).

Using 2014 Pennsylvania test score data, the proposal explains and illustrates that the longer a Mastery turnaround school is open, the greater the gains in closing the proficiency gap with statewide averages in reading and math, therefore demonstrating significant increases in student achievement (p. e37). For example, Mastery schools restarted in 2014 have reading proficiency gaps that are about 50% of the average statewide proficiency rate, about 20 points better than the baseline reading proficiency gap of about 30% prior to turnaround. However, Mastery schools restarted in 2011 and have been open as Mastery schools longer have reading proficiency gaps that are almost 70% of the average statewide proficiency rate, about 30 points better than the baseline reading proficiency gap of about 40% (p. e39). Because 88% of Mastery's students are low-income, the proposal explains that there is little variance in the academic performance of this subgroup when compared to school-wide performance (p. e41), and therefore, there are similar increases in student achievement for low-income students as demonstrated with school-wide data. While the proficiency rates for students with disabilities dropped over the past three years for both the state and Mastery schools, students with disabilities at Mastery schools still performed significantly better on 2014 state tests than prior to restart (p. e43-44).

### Weaknesses:

It is difficult to determine the consistency over the past three years of Mastery's success in significantly increasing student achievement because the application presents aggregate proficiency gap data by school cohorts based on just 2014 test results (charts on p. e39, e42, e44) rather than by classes of students based on 2012, 2013, and 2014 test results. Further, the application does not present enough aggregate data on ELL student performance—reasoning that data cannot be provided because too few numbers of ELL students in some schools to consider a cohort (p. e45)—to determine increases in student achievement over the past three years. The applicant should still be able to present at least the aggregate data for all ELL students network-wide for each of the past three years.

### 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:

The applicant is successful in closing achievement gaps for low-income students students, and the application explains that "compared to the state, low-income students at Mastery almost universally outperform their low-income peers in both reading and math" (p. e41). The application explains that there is little to no difference between the performance of African-American students and overall school-wide performance (p. e42), and because 11 out of 12 Mastery turnaround schools in Philadelphia continued to close the proficiency gap in reading and 10 out of 12 made progress in closing the gap in math over the past three years (p. e36-38), the applicant is clearly making progress in closing the historic achievement gap for African-American students.

### Weaknesses:

The applicant acknowledges that students with disabilities at Mastery schools are still far behind their school-wide peers (p. e43), and the applicant is making it a priority to better serve these students (p. e45).

## Sub Question

It is not clear whether Exhibit A-5 (p. e42), illustrating the closing of the achievement gap for low-income students, and Exhibit A-6 (p. e44), illustrating the closing of the achievement gap for students with disabilities, are measuring achievement gaps as percentages of statewide averages for the respective student subgroups or statewide averages for all students. If the tables measure gaps as percentages of statewide averages for the respective subgroups, Mastery is unlikely closing historic achievement gaps for low-income students and students with disabilities. If the tables measure gaps as percentages of statewide averages for all students, Mastery is likely closing historic achievement gaps for low-income students in an impressive way, especially in math, and possibly closing historic achievement gaps for students with disabilities. However, it is difficult to get an accurate picture because the application does not present data in a way that compares subgroups, within Mastery's network as well as statewide, to illustrate historic gaps, such as those between African-American and white students. In addition, it is difficult to determine the consistency over the past three years of Mastery's success in closing historic achievement gaps because the application presents aggregate proficiency gap data by school cohorts based on just 2014 test results (charts on p. e42, e44) rather than by classes of students based on 2012, 2013, and 2014 test results.

Overall, the applicant provides substantial school-level data in Appendix F (p. e350-484) but does not clearly present it in an aggregated format that can be easily evaluated against this criterion. Therefore, it is unclear how successful the applicant is at closing historic achievement gaps.

## 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:

Every Mastery high school has a significantly higher graduation rate than the district's graduation rates over the past three years (p. e46), and the applicant enrolls students into college at a much higher rate than the district's 2012 rate of 38% (which is the most current district college enrollment data available) (p. e47), although comparisons to statewide averages and by educationally disadvantaged subgroups are not provided.

#### Weaknesses:

It is not clear whether Exhibit A-5 (p. e42), illustrating the closing of the achievement gap for low-income students, and Exhibit A-6 (p. e44), illustrating the closing of the achievement gap for students with disabilities, are measuring achievement gaps as percentages of statewide averages for the respective student subgroups or statewide averages for all students. If the tables measure gaps as percentages of statewide averages for the respective subgroups, Mastery is not achieving better results for low-income students and students with disabilities. If the tables measure gaps as percentages of statewide averages for all students, it does not compare these subgroups against their respective peers statewide. It is difficult to get an accurate picture because the application does not present data in a way that compares subgroups between Mastery's network and statewide averages for such students. In addition, it is difficult to determine the consistency over the past three years of Mastery's success in achieving results for educationally disadvantaged students because the application presents aggregate proficiency gap data by school cohorts based on just 2014 test results (charts on p. e42, e44) rather than by classes of students based on 2012, 2013, and 2014 test results.

Overall, the applicant provides substantial school-level data in Appendix F (p. e350-484) but does not clearly present it in an aggregated format that can be easily evaluated against this criterion. Therefore, it is unclear how successful the applicant is at achieving proficiency results for educationally disadvantaged students that are significantly higher than statewide averages.

## Sub Question

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 applicant is proposing to expand into neighborhoods with high populations of educationally disadvantaged students in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and Washington, D.C. (p. e51, e55) As evidence of its ability to serve such educationally disadvantaged populations, the applicant points to data provided earlier in its application (p. e51) demonstrating its success in reducing the proficiency gaps in reading and math for educationally disadvantaged students, particularly low-income students (p. e41) and, to a lesser extent, students with disabilities (p. e43-44); in closing historic achievement gaps (p. e41-46); and with student achievement results that are higher than statewide averages in respective subgroups (p. e41-46), including graduation and college enrollment rates (p. e46-47). In addition, the proposed project will establish additional supports for students with disabilities, including specialized positions dedicated to ensuring academic success for these students, which the applicant states is its top priority in its new phase of growth (p. e52-53). Further, the proposal describes "structured immersion and bi-literacy" supports for ELL students to allow these students to "preserve their native language while learning English" while still providing individualized supports (p. e52-53).

#### **Weaknesses:**

Because Mastery only restarts schools that are SIG-eligible and only with the cooperation of the district, the proposal only confirms expansion in certain districts, like Philadelphia and Camden, NJ (p. e55). However, the proposal does not adequately explain the possible differences in student demographics in other areas to which it is considering expanding, such as Washington, D.C. or Wilmington, DE, and how the applicant will serve these potentially more diverse or different populations.

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 project goals and objectives are clearly specified and measurable and the outcomes are attainable. For example, one objective is to increase the number of high-quality charter schools in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and Washington, D.C. One of the performance measures is that Mastery opens 12 new charter schools in the next five years, which aligns to the objective and is an attainable goal given its history of growth (p. e58). In addition, the applicant has a track record of accomplishing the stated outcomes, having opened 13 charter schools over the last five years in Philadelphia and Camden (p. e56).

**Weaknesses:**

The proposal does not adequately explain the possible differences in student demographics in other areas to which it is considering expanding, such as Washington, D.C. or Wilmington, DE, and how the applicant will serve these potentially more diverse or different populations. The proposal even acknowledges that most of Mastery's schools "do not serve a high ELL population" (p. e54), yet the project design does not address the attainability of outcomes given this possible difference.

**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 proposal contains strong project management and business plans, and the applicant clearly has the capacity to successfully implement and manage the proposed project. Some concerns include a financial model that requires a significant amount of other funds to be stable and sustainable and a lack of a description of a school closure and charter withdrawal plan.

**Reader's Score: 16**

**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 project management plan clearly defines responsibilities, timelines, and milestones/performance measures for accomplishing project tasks that are aligned to the project objectives (p. e69-72). For example, the management plan lists a milestone/performance measure that one school is to open in 2015, two in 2016, and three each year in 2017, 2018, and 2019, which is a reasonable growth plan. Each school is to be opened by September 1 and that the CEO is the lead responsible party, clearly stating the timeline and responsibility. Further, this clearly aligns to

## Sub Question

the project objective of increasing the number of high-quality charter schools (p. e70).

### 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:

A strong central office drives program implementation and improvement at all Mastery schools, including a business plan for improving, sustaining, and ensuring the quality and performance of all new and existing Mastery schools (p. e73). The business plan includes plans for the areas of leadership, such as an "Apprentice School Leaders" program to develop leadership capacity (p. e63-64, e67); teacher recruitment and human resources, such as a robust HR information system tracks teacher retention, performance, evaluation, and feedback (p. e64); facilities, which is led by the COO and describes plans to lease and renovate existing facilities from school districts (p. e73-74); financial management and fundraising, including dedicated teams that handle finance, compliance, and development (p. e74-75); student academic achievement supports, which includes developing and implementing the "Mastery Core Competencies" of teacher training and coaching, school leadership, district-level human resources, and academic management systems (p. e61-63, e65-67); data systems, including a dedicated data team that builds and maintains comprehensive data systems (p. e75); parent engagement, such as "Parent Associations" (p. e75); and board governance and relationship with authorizers, including clear lines of internal communication with the CEO acting as liaison to all board members for Mastery schools and the Deputy Chief of Staff managing the relationships with authorizers (p. e75-77).

### 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 applicant has demonstrated commitment from current and future partners, particularly the school districts in which the project seeks to expand, and provides evidence of broad stakeholder support (p. e79-80), including letters from school districts (such as the District of Philadelphia and Camden City School District), funders (such as the Charter School Growth Fund, Rodel Foundation of Delaware, and Michael & Susan Dell Foundation), authorizers (such as the D.C. Public Charter School Board and New Jersey Department of Education), and parent groups (e790-801). Further, the applicant already has \$8,520,000 in private grants and donations pledged to its expansion plan (Exhibit D-2, p. e78).

### Weaknesses:

The proposal provides a five-year financial plan that shows Mastery will need a significant amount of additional funds to meet the expansion plan's needs. The financial plan shows that over the next five years, Mastery still needs \$37,269,750 of additional funds outside of local per-pupil funding and existing pledges to implement the

#### Sub Question

expansion plan and, if awarded this CSP grant, that number is reduced to a still sizeable \$27,682,484 (p. e78).

#### 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:

No strengths noted.

##### Weaknesses:

The proposal does not describe a plan for closing a failing Mastery school or withdrawing a charter for such a school, especially measures to ensure parents and students are informed well in advance.

#### 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 leadership team has ample and broad experience in educational leadership, management, and school expansion, including the CEO who, founded Mastery and has led the organization through its expansion activities thus far; the Chief of Schools, who has held various education leadership positions with Mastery since 2005; the Chief Operations Officer, who has experience in managing public organizations, including expansion activities with Mastery; and the Chief Financial Officer, who has over 19 years of finance and accounting experience. The project director has experience in managing grant projects of similar size and scope as being proposed, as she served as the project director for Mastery's 2010 CSP grant award (p. e81-83).

##### 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 proposal includes both an internal and external evaluation plan. The internal plan clearly seeks to measure data related to the intended outcomes of the proposed project, including expansion data (e.g., number of schools opened), student assessment data, teacher and leader professional development (e.g., percent of teachers improving over the school year), and family and student engagement (e.g., percent of parents annually engaged in school programs). The external evaluation will be conducted by an independent evaluator that has not yet been identified and will use the data collected internally by the applicant (p. 83-87).

**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](http://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](http://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](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=HUD_Form_50153.pdf).

**Strengths:**

The applicant has experience with, and operates, turnaround schools. In addition, Mastery already has approval to turnaround two more schools in partnership with the Philadelphia school district. Further, the districts in which the applicant intends to expand into have recruited the applicant to apply to turn around schools (p. e29-31).

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:** 4

**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](http://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](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ellresources.html)).**

**Strengths:**

The proposal acknowledges that Mastery schools "tend to be located in and serve highly racially isolated communities" but describes core programs the applicant employs to counteract racial isolation, such as a "cultural context" focus in school programming and programs that expose students to a diversity of adults outside of the classroom (p. e32-33), thereby demonstrating the applicant takes active measures to avoid racial isolation. Further, the applicant serves students with disabilities at a rate at least as comparable to its host districts (p. e33). In Camden, New Jersey, the applicant serves ELL students at a rate at least as comparable to the district (p. e34), and while in Philadelphia the applicant serves ELL students at a rate lower than the district as a whole, the applicant states that its ELL enrollment rate is at least comparable to the surrounding neighborhoods in West and Northeast Philadelphia where there are smaller populations of non-native speakers (p. e33-34).

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:** 3

---

**Status:** Submitted

**Last Updated:** 08/28/2015 12:40 PM