

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 02/11/2010 02:04 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Arizona Department of Education (U282A090007)

Reader #4: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Summary Comments		
Summary Comments		
1. QUESTION 1	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Selection Criteria		
The contribution the charter schools grant program will make.....		
1. QUESTION 2	30	24
The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA		
1. QUESTION 3	30	30
The number of high-quality charter schools to be created		
1. QUESTION 4	30	26
The quality of the management plan...		
1. QUESTION 5	30	24
The quality of the evaluation plan		
1. QUESTION 6	30	26
Sub Total	150	130
Total	150	130

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Non Dissemination: 84.282A

Reader #4: *****

Applicant: Arizona Department of Education (U282A090007)

Questions

Summary Comments - Summary Comments

1. Summary Comments

General:

Overall, Arizona's application was well-written and well thought out. The goals and objectives presented to increase the quality of schools and improve academic achievement were clearly stated with strong activities and performance measures attached to each. A few of the performance measures were duplicated in a couple of objectives, so perhaps the duplicates could be re-interpreted to provide new data and analysis for each objective. The management plan and evaluation plan were intricate and highlighted all the relevant points of the plans, from finding an evaluator to distributing the final reports.]

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - The contribution the charter schools grant program will make.....

1. The contribution the charter schools grant program will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged and other students to achieve State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to provide a description of the objectives for the SEA's charter school grant program and how these objectives will be fulfilled, including steps taken by the SEA to inform teachers, parents, and communities of the SEA's charter school grant program and how the SEA will disseminate best or promising practices of charter schools to each LEA in the State.

Strengths:

The three primary objectives listed on page 19 are clear, concise, achievable and measurable. Each objective deals with either improving the number of high-quality charter schools in the state or improving achievement in various ways. The performance measures also are clearly quantifiable and each one deals with a specific goal (p. 19). The state recognizes the need for start-up grants, because there is currently no state funding to assist schools (p. 19). The dissemination discussion on page 24 was well thought-out and specific measures to share information, such as collaborating with the ACSA, the Spotlight on Success, and additional conferences, would reach a lot of people in addition to the traditional means of using the media. Through a previous grant, at-risk charter students have been able to take AP courses at a much higher rate.

Weaknesses:

For a few of the performance measures, specifically on page 22, the measurement is to exceed the AYP rate of district schools or other charter schools, but a more specific percentage would have been more useful to truly gauge high-quality. While it is mentioned that competitive preference will be given to charters serving at-risk and secondary populations, the overall discussion on the population charter schools serve and how they are achieving was missing.

Reader's Score: 24

Selection Criteria - The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA

1. The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA to charter schools under the State's charter school law.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to include a description of how the State's law establishes an administrative relationship between the charter school and the authorized public chartering agency and exempts charter schools from significant State or local rules that inhibit the flexible operation and management of public schools.

The Secretary also encourages the applicant to include a description of the degree of autonomy charter schools have achieved over such matters as the charter school's budget, expenditures, daily operation, and personnel in accordance with their State's law.

Strengths:

Arizona's charter school law is very strong and gives charter schools clear autonomy in all aspects of operations, curriculum, personnel, teacher certification, budgeting, and other examples cited on pages 26 and 27. Smaller schools are allowed exemptions from public bidding requirements (p. 25) due to the burden on small staff. The governing body of a charter school is responsible for all policy decisions, and charters are considered to be their own LEA, allowing them to receive all funds directly and act as their own de facto school board. Charters are also allowed to form relationships with for-profit management companies.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 30

Selection Criteria - The number of high-quality charter schools to be created

1. The number of high-quality charter schools to be created in the State.

Note: The Secretary considers the SEA's reasonable estimate of the number of new charter schools to be authorized and opened in the State during the three-year period of this grant.

The Secretary also considers how the SEA will inform each charter school in the State about Federal funds the charter school is eligible to receive and ensure that each charter school in the State receives the school's commensurate share of Federal education funds that are allocated by formula each year, including during the first year of operation of the school and during a year in which the school's enrollment expands significantly.

Strengths:

The applicant discusses the growth of charters over time and highlights that nine percent of all public students are in charters, one of the highest numbers in the country (p. 31). While the number of charters being approved each year has remained somewhat stable, there has been an increase in students attending, therefore supporting the need for charter schools (p. 31). With two current sponsors in the state and the past workloads of those sponsors, 92 charter schools to open within the time frame is reasonable, although not very ambitious. The state will also give grants not only to upcoming approved charters, but charters that were recently approved, but do not currently have any start-up funds. This

will ensure that the planning time lag will not occur as often in Arizona (p. 28). The application gave a very thorough explanation of how charters are informed about federal funds, through a variety of means, and different types of technical assistance sessions and meetings with staff guide them through the process.

Weaknesses:

There was not a clear discussion of how charter funds would be adjusted if enrollment changes or how they ensure funds to the charters. It would have been helpful to see some data backing up the need for charters in urban, rural and other at-risk areas.

Reader's Score: 26

Selection Criteria - The quality of the management plan...

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

Note: In addition to describing the proposed objectives of the SEA charter school grant program and how these objectives will be fulfilled, the Secretary encourages applicants to provide descriptions of the steps to be taken by the SEA to award subgrant funds to eligible applicants desiring to receive these funds, including descriptions of the peer review process the SEA will use to review applications for assistance, the timelines for awarding such funds, and how the SEA will assess the quality of the applications.

Strengths:

The management plan ties directly back to the objectives and performance measures explained in previous sections of the application. Under each performance measures are a list of activities, responsibilities, timeline and milestones. The description of the subgrant process is extensive and discusses the overall timeline (for each year of the grant), how the applications will be evaluated, and how much funds will be available (p. 43-48). Every detail of the process is noted from prospective applicant workshops to multiple reviews and revisions of applications to the final approval. The FAME scale discussed on p. 46 shows how the applications are clearly evaluated. Using a peer review panel composed of individuals currently working with the ASBCS on other matters means that the reviewers will have a vast knowledge of charter schools in Arizona and what makes a successful application (p. 49).

Weaknesses:

Some of the performance measures are duplicates throughout the objectives (such as 2a and 3b) and the application would be stronger if each measurement was unique. Milestones were unclear and could have been stronger throughout the management plan.

Reader's Score: 24

Selection Criteria - The quality of the evaluation plan

- 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 and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible.**

The Secretary encourages the applicant to include a strong evaluation plan in the application narrative

and to use that plan, as appropriate, to shape the development of the project from the beginning of the grant period. The Secretary encourages the applicant to design the plan so that it includes (a) benchmarks to monitor progress toward specific project objectives and (b) outcome measures to assess the impact on teaching and learning or other important outcomes for project participants. In its plan, we encourage the applicant to identify the individual and/or organization that has agreed to serve as evaluator for the project and to describe the qualifications of that evaluator. We also encourage the applicant to describe, in its application, the evaluation design, indicating: (1) the types of data that will be collected; (2) when various types of data will be collected; (3) the methods that will be used; (4) the instruments that will be developed and when; (5) how the data will be analyzed; (6) when reports of results and outcomes will be available; and (7) how the applicant will use the information collected through the evaluation to monitor progress of the funded project and to provide accountability information both about success at the initial site and effective strategies for replication in other settings. Applicants are encouraged to devote an appropriate level of resources to project evaluation.

Strengths:

Using a two-fold process of evaluation, looking at the process and the performance of the project, will ensure an all-encompassing evaluation of the project, which is useful to improve (p. 53). The reviewer has been chosen and has extensive experience evaluating schools and working with the department (p. 57). The bullet point list touches on all seven sections the applicant was instructed to discuss and includes a timeline with each benchmark of data collected. The outcome performance measures were reiterated and all have quantifiable items to analyze. The discussion on the two types of analyzing, comparison and absolute, (p. 60) is important to show that the department is evaluating this program from all levels and even have additional questions, that are not part of the specific objectives, but need to be addressed.

Weaknesses:

The qualitative data collected will come from survey results and focus groups, but there wasn't any detail explaining what the survey would ask or who would fill it out, or how focus groups would be conducted and what would be the main topics or goals of these groups. There also was not enough detail explaining the methods for collection.

Reader's Score: **26**

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 02/11/2010 02:04 PM

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Non Dissemination: 84.282A

Reader #5: *****

Applicant: Arizona Department of Education (U282A090007)

Questions

Summary Comments - Summary Comments

1. Summary Comments

General:

The applicant has done a good job of identifying and responding to the criteria as stipulated in the application. Please fine tune you weaknesses for more clarity of the criteria as stipulated in the grant application. The overall proposal was well organized and clearly stated.]

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - The contribution the charter schools grant program will make.....

1. The contribution the charter schools grant program will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged and other students to achieve State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to provide a description of the objectives for the SEA's charter school grant program and how these objectives will be fulfilled, including steps taken by the SEA to inform teachers, parents, and communities of the SEA's charter school grant program and how the SEA will disseminate best or promising practices of charter schools to each LEA in the State.

Strengths:

The applicants charter schools will demonstrate a graduation rate higher than the state average for charter schools serving similar demographics by the end of the second year.pp 2

The applicants will use the state standards to measure the growth of student acheivement.pp 2

80 pre cent of the applicants charter school high school students will meet or exceed the challenging academic standards in each content area of the instrument. pp 3

The applicant's improvement initiative has focused on middle and high school research based strategies.pp 4

Weaknesses:

The applicants goals and standards appear to be overly ambitious and unrealistic.

Reader's Score: 25

Selection Criteria - The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA

1. The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA to charter schools under the State's charter school law.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to include a description of how the State's law establishes an administrative relationship between the charter school and the authorized public chartering agency and exempts charter schools from significant State or local rules that inhibit the flexible operation and management of public schools.

The Secretary also encourages the applicant to include a description of the degree of autonomy charter schools have achieved over such matters as the charter school's budget, expenditures, daily operation, and personnel in accordance with their State's law.

Strengths:

The applicant states that teachers in the charter schools are expected to meet the federal requirements of No Child Left Behind but any additional certification requirements for teachers and administrators will be determined by the school policy level. pp 25

The applicant states that the charter school will have full autonomy to control their budgets, expenditures and personnel. pp 25

The charter school governing body will be responsible for making policy decisions. pp 25

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score: 25

Selection Criteria - The number of high-quality charter schools to be created

1. The number of high-quality charter schools to be created in the State.

Note: The Secretary considers the SEA's reasonable estimate of the number of new charter schools to be authorized and opened in the State during the three-year period of this grant.

The Secretary also considers how the SEA will inform each charter school in the State about Federal funds the charter school is eligible to receive and ensure that each charter school in the State receives the school's commensurate share of Federal education funds that are allocated by formula each year, including during the first year of operation of the school and during a year in which the school's enrollment expands significantly.

Strengths:

Three of four schools receiving blue ribbons were charter schools. pp 10

The applicants have authorized more charter schools than any district in the country. pp 9

All sub-grantees will be annually monitored, and will be required to indicate how they are progressing toward meeting their student achievement outcome measures. While sub grants are awarded for three-year-periods-funding for years two and three will be contingent on making substantive annual progress toward meeting performance objectives. pp 21

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not detail how each school will be allocated their appropriate amount of funds.

Reader's Score: 26

Selection Criteria - The quality of the management plan...

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

Note: In addition to describing the proposed objectives of the SEA charter school grant program and how these objectives will be fulfilled, the Secretary encourages applicants to provide descriptions of the steps to be taken by the SEA to award subgrant funds to eligible applicants desiring to receive these funds, including descriptions of the peer review process the SEA will use to review applications for assistance, the timelines for awarding such funds, and how the SEA will assess the quality of the applications.

Strengths:

The applicant management plan includes measurable outcomes performance measures that have all been directly aligned to the objectives of the program's state standards and the GPRA reporting requirements of the CSP grant program, and have been designed to ensure that the program progress and achieve stated outcomes and outcome performances and also specifies responsibilities, timelines, and milestones. pp34

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score: 26

Selection Criteria - The quality of the evaluation plan

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 and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible.

The Secretary encourages the applicant to include a strong evaluation plan in the application narrative and to use that plan, as appropriate, to shape the development of the project from the beginning of the grant period. The Secretary encourages the applicant to design the plan so that it includes (a) benchmarks to monitor progress toward specific project objectives and (b) outcome measures to assess the impact on teaching and learning or other important outcomes for project participants. In its plan, we encourage the applicant to identify the individual and/or organization that has agreed to serve as evaluator for the project and to describe the qualifications of that evaluator. We also encourage the applicant to describe, in its application, the evaluation design, indicating: (1) the types of data that will be collected; (2) when various types of data will be collected; (3) the methods that will be used; (4) the instruments that will be developed and when; (5) how the data will be analyzed; (6) when reports of results and outcomes will be available; and (7) how the applicant will use the information collected

through the evaluation to monitor progress of the funded project and to provide accountability information both about success at the initial site and effective strategies for replication in other settings. Applicants are encouraged to devote an appropriate level of resources to project evaluation.

Strengths:

The applicants department of Education will engage in a two-fold evaluation process that will incorporate both a process and performance evaluation. The AZCSIP will evaluate the process and monitor the progress toward meeting project benchmarks as detailed in the management plan. pp 53

The applicants reporting requirements have been designed to be clearly measurable, and produce relevant quantitative data. pp 53

All of the applicants performance measures have been aligned to the objectives of the AZCISP, and the GPRA reporting requirements of the CSP, and have been designed to be clearly measurable, and should produce measurable quantitative data.

The applicant will use a combination of qualitative and quantitative data that will be used to measure the amount of success or failures the program has incurred. pp 57

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not state how they will provide feedback to the various charter schools.

Reader's Score: 24

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 02/11/2010 02:04 PM

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Non Dissemination: 84.282A

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Arizona Department of Education (U282A090007)

Questions

Summary Comments - Summary Comments

1. Summary Comments

General:

This application is very strong. To the extent points were deducted, it was for lack of specificity about some activities and questions about the charter school market saturation in the state.

In addition, there appear to be a great many charter schools operating quite autonomously in Arizona. With such a small number of closures to date it raises questions about the quality and accountability associated with the state's charter school sector. It would have been helpful to have more information in this regard.

However, overall it is clear that Arizona has an overall charter school sector that operates in close alignment with the intent and provisions of the federal CSP.]

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - The contribution the charter schools grant program will make.....

1. The contribution the charter schools grant program will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged and other students to achieve State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to provide a description of the objectives for the SEA's charter school grant program and how these objectives will be fulfilled, including steps taken by the SEA to inform teachers, parents, and communities of the SEA's charter school grant program and how the SEA will disseminate best or promising practices of charter schools to each LEA in the State.

Strengths:

The response is complete, well-organized, includes targeted performance measures for each objective, and appears to be ambitious enough that it will lead to meaningful change in the state.

The monitoring activity appears to be appropriately emphasized.

The steps taken to inform parents, teachers and communities are explicitly stated and form a good starting point for public outreach.

Dissemination of best or promising practices is included, and plans for this activity appear to be robust.

Weaknesses:

It isn't exactly clear where these 92 new schools will be located or who they will be serving - for example, it says rural or urban, but does that mean none of them will be in suburban areas? The state should describe how it will ensure that educationally underserved pupils are specifically targeted. Perhaps, for example, it might partner with its authorizing bodies to only award charters and subgrant funding to schools that serve specific student populations, instead of just giving priority.

It would have been helpful to have more clarity on this unique student population and how the state will ensure higher-quality opportunities specifically geared for these students.

Technical assistance should be described in greater detail.

Reader's Score: 24

Selection Criteria - The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA**1. The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA to charter schools under the State's charter school law.**

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to include a description of how the State's law establishes an administrative relationship between the charter school and the authorized public chartering agency and exempts charter schools from significant State or local rules that inhibit the flexible operation and management of public schools.

The Secretary also encourages the applicant to include a description of the degree of autonomy charter schools have achieved over such matters as the charter school's budget, expenditures, daily operation, and personnel in accordance with their State's law.

Strengths:

There is a high degree of autonomy and flexibility, which has been validated and given high marks by a recognized third party.

Boards have been given broad exemptions from state and local statute and are fully accountable to their authorizers and to the public for delivering strong results. Budgetary, curricular, and contractual flexibility and autonomy is obvious.

Weaknesses:

On the accountability side, with such a large number of charters in existence (467, as stated on page 9) and only 12 closures to date (as stated on page ten), it seems that quality may be a concern. A richer description of how schools are held accountable might have been useful here.

Reader's Score: 28

Selection Criteria - The number of high-quality charter schools to be created**1. The number of high-quality charter schools to be created in the State.**

Note: The Secretary considers the SEA's reasonable estimate of the number of new charter schools to be authorized and opened in the State during the three-year period of this grant.

The Secretary also considers how the SEA will inform each charter school in the State about Federal

funds the charter school is eligible to receive and ensure that each charter school in the State receives the school's commensurate share of Federal education funds that are allocated by formula each year, including during the first year of operation of the school and during a year in which the school's enrollment expands significantly.

Strengths:

Plans for growth are clearly described and ambitious.

Statistical evidence of growth is provided and demonstrates the state's capacity for managing and sustaining its large charter sector.

Weaknesses:

Limited evidence of future demand is provided (e.g., waiting lists), making it difficult to evaluate market saturation. It is hard to evaluate whether 92 schools is realistic or sustainable. This is a big issue given the large number of schools that already exist.

The distribution of federal funds in the case of significant expansion is not addressed as it should be.

Reader's Score: 24

Selection Criteria - The quality of the management plan...

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

Note: In addition to describing the proposed objectives of the SEA charter school grant program and how these objectives will be fulfilled, the Secretary encourages applicants to provide descriptions of the steps to be taken by the SEA to award subgrant funds to eligible applicants desiring to receive these funds, including descriptions of the peer review process the SEA will use to review applications for assistance, the timelines for awarding such funds, and how the SEA will assess the quality of the applications.

Strengths:

Project plan is well-organized and clearly tied to project objectives and measures, demonstrating careful strategic thought.

Staffing information is included and staffing levels appear to be sufficient to perform all specified activities.

Grant management procedures are described and appear to be solid.

Management plan places responsibility for developing "rigorous plans" for implementation on school leaders, presumably leading to sustained flexibility and opportunities to innovate. The state will act as an evaluator only, rather than developing or "seeding" the practices it wants.

The utilization of a leadership/advisory team is very positive.

Weaknesses:

More description of technical assistance (its nature, substance, content, etc) would have been useful. This seemed to be missing. How will this assistance clearly lead to the accomplishment of project objectives?

Reader's Score: 26

Selection Criteria - The quality of the evaluation plan

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 and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible.

The Secretary encourages the applicant to include a strong evaluation plan in the application narrative and to use that plan, as appropriate, to shape the development of the project from the beginning of the grant period. The Secretary encourages the applicant to design the plan so that it includes (a) benchmarks to monitor progress toward specific project objectives and (b) outcome measures to assess the impact on teaching and learning or other important outcomes for project participants. In its plan, we encourage the applicant to identify the individual and/or organization that has agreed to serve as evaluator for the project and to describe the qualifications of that evaluator. We also encourage the applicant to describe, in its application, the evaluation design, indicating: (1) the types of data that will be collected; (2) when various types of data will be collected; (3) the methods that will be used; (4) the instruments that will be developed and when; (5) how the data will be analyzed; (6) when reports of results and outcomes will be available; and (7) how the applicant will use the information collected through the evaluation to monitor progress of the funded project and to provide accountability information both about success at the initial site and effective strategies for replication in other settings. Applicants are encouraged to devote an appropriate level of resources to project evaluation.

Strengths:

The distinction between process and performance evaluation is very positive.

The performance measures are tracked consistently back through the objectives and activities of the program and can be used to provide evaluative feedback at various regular points throughout the life of the program.

The use of survey/focus group instruments is a strong component to help the state track its own performance.

Evaluative tools are rigorous, specific and solid.

Weaknesses:

State spent most time on evaluation of school and limited time on evaluation of itself and its own program.

Technical assistance activities to support outcomes are never fully addressed or described.

Reader's Score: 25

Status: Submitted

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Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Arizona Department of Education (U282A090007)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Summary Comments		
Summary Comments		
1. QUESTION 1	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Selection Criteria		
The contribution the charter schools grant program will make.....		
1. QUESTION 2	30	25
The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA		
1. QUESTION 3	30	30
The number of high-quality charter schools to be created		
1. QUESTION 4	30	27
The quality of the management plan...		
1. QUESTION 5	30	25
The quality of the evaluation plan		
1. QUESTION 6	30	20
Sub Total	150	127
Total	150	127

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Non Dissemination: 84.282A

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Arizona Department of Education (U282A090007)

Questions

Summary Comments - Summary Comments

1. Summary Comments

General:

The application is well organized with clear goals and objectives. Some modifications to the evaluation plan would strengthen the application|

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - The contribution the charter schools grant program will make.....

1. The contribution the charter schools grant program will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged and other students to achieve State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to provide a description of the objectives for the SEA's charter school grant program and how these objectives will be fulfilled, including steps taken by the SEA to inform teachers, parents, and communities of the SEA's charter school grant program and how the SEA will disseminate best or promising practices of charter schools to each LEA in the State.

Strengths:

The purpose of this grant is to encourage the creation of 92 schools serving high need students (abstract). The program fits in well with the state's involvement in high school reform (p.4-6).

The application includes three specific, measurable goals (p.19). The applicant intends to encourage the creation of high-performing charter schools through a selective subgrant competition process, monitoring, and technical assistance (p.27).

The applicant will highlight and disseminate information about high-performing charter schools to local school districts through an outreach process that includes presentations at conferences and media outreach (p.21). Successful charter schools were highlighted in the state's Spotlight on Success awards ceremony and other conferences (p.4).

Weaknesses:

The goals set for schools are very ambitious. It is likely that the school will need abundant support and assistance to reach these heights. However, the application does not provide any details about its technical support and assistance.

Reader's Score: 25

Selection Criteria - The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA

1. The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA to charter schools under the State's charter school law.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to include a description of how the State's law establishes an administrative relationship between the charter school and the authorized public chartering agency and exempts charter schools from significant State or local rules that inhibit the flexible operation and management of public schools.

The Secretary also encourages the applicant to include a description of the degree of autonomy charter schools have achieved over such matters as the charter school's budget, expenditures, daily operation, and personnel in accordance with their State's law.

Strengths:

The state has two authorizers and a history of authorizing schools. Arizona has 467 charter schools (p.9). Charter schools are considered local education agencies under the law. They enjoy full autonomy over their own budgets, expenditures, curricula, operations and personnel (p.24-27). The flexibility afforded under the Arizona charter law earned it the highest grade from the Center for Education Reform (p.24).

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 30

Selection Criteria - The number of high-quality charter schools to be created

1. The number of high-quality charter schools to be created in the State.

Note: The Secretary considers the SEA's reasonable estimate of the number of new charter schools to be authorized and opened in the State during the three-year period of this grant.

The Secretary also considers how the SEA will inform each charter school in the State about Federal funds the charter school is eligible to receive and ensure that each charter school in the State receives the school's commensurate share of Federal education funds that are allocated by formula each year, including during the first year of operation of the school and during a year in which the school's enrollment expands significantly.

Strengths:

The purpose of this grant is to encourage the creation of 92 schools serving high need students (abstract). This number is appropriate given the state's history.

The Arizona Department of Education uses several methods to notify charter schools of their federal funds including workshops, online resources, and e-mail alerts. Schools apply directly through the state because they are considered independent local school districts (p.13-14).

Weaknesses:

Given the high number of charter schools in the state, it is unclear what the demand is for additional schools. Some discussion of this issue would strengthen the application.

Reader's Score: 27

Selection Criteria - The quality of the management plan...

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

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Strengths:

The application provides a management plan with activities and timeline (p.35-43). It also provides a lengthy description of its subgrant process and defines the responsibilities of the Leadership Advisory Team, the project director, the project specialist, the administrative assistant, and an evaluator (p.43-49).

Weaknesses:

The application does not include the qualifications for the individuals who will be hired to fill these positions. In the management plan, it is not clear what the milestones are for each activity.

Reader's Score: 25

Selection Criteria - The quality of the evaluation plan

- 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 and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible.**

The Secretary encourages the applicant to include a strong evaluation plan in the application narrative and to use that plan, as appropriate, to shape the development of the project from the beginning of the grant period. The Secretary encourages the applicant to design the plan so that it includes (a)

benchmarks to monitor progress toward specific project objectives and (b) outcome measures to assess the impact on teaching and learning or other important outcomes for project participants. In its plan, we encourage the applicant to identify the individual and/or organization that has agreed to serve as evaluator for the project and to describe the qualifications of that evaluator. We also encourage the applicant to describe, in its application, the evaluation design, indicating: (1) the types of data that will be collected; (2) when various types of data will be collected; (3) the methods that will be used; (4) the instruments that will be developed and when; (5) how the data will be analyzed; (6) when reports of results and outcomes will be available; and (7) how the applicant will use the information collected through the evaluation to monitor progress of the funded project and to provide accountability information both about success at the initial site and effective strategies for replication in other settings. Applicants are encouraged to devote an appropriate level of resources to project evaluation.

Strengths:

The applicant has selected experienced evaluator to conduct the evaluation (p.57). The application has quantifiable objectives and outcomes (p.53-57). The evaluation plan identifies the types of data that will be collected, when they will be collected, what kinds of questions the evaluator will ask, and when reports will be available (p.57-61).

Weaknesses:

With the exception of questions nine and 10, the evaluation plan does not evaluate performance of the applicant (p.61). A complete evaluation plan should include the relation of the charter school office's services including its technical assistance and monitoring activities.

Reader's Score: **20**

Status: Submitted
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