

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





# Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Non Dissemination: 84.282A

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

Applicant: Louisiana Department of Education (U282A090015)

## Questions

### Summary Comments - Summary Comments

#### 1. Summary Comments

##### General:

Overall, this is a high-quality submission with a very sound set of objectives and evaluations in place. Weaknesses are limited to greater clarity in the activity descriptions and questions about current program quality and flexibility.]

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:

Project objectives are logical and consistent and, if accomplished, will make a substantial contribution to charter schooling in the state.

The utilization of a listserv for the charter schools office is a favorable strategy for communication.

The enrollment requirements relative to at-risk, educationally disadvantaged students will ensure appropriate levels of attention to this population (though there is a question about flexibility that is raised later in the application).

Steps to inform teachers, parents and communities are included on pages 21 and 23 and seem aggressive.

Dissemination activities are included on pages 30-31 and represent a good beginning for the state.

##### Weaknesses:

Performance measures listed under each project objective resemble activities, where they should more clearly be shown as evaluative tools. (Page 22, first performance measure under Objective 1; page 23, first, third, fourth and fifth performance measures under Objective 2, and page 26, first performance measure under Objective 3). Completion of an activity is not sufficient to show qualitative or quantitative evaluation, and would perhaps be better shown as part of the

management plan, rather than the evaluation piece.

Evidence of existing school quality, current school demographics, and various types of charter schools currently operational has not been provided; it is difficult to evaluate the relative ambition and reasonability of the project objectives without knowing where the state's charter school sector is currently positioned.

**Reader's Score: 23**

**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:**

Statutory autonomy appears to be significant and offers charter schools a fair amount of autonomous control.

State law clearly elucidates the 37 areas of compliance to which charter schools must adhere (beginning on page 37), providing clear guidance for charter school developers and leaders.

**Weaknesses:**

Within the 37 areas of compliance unable to be waived by charter schools, there are still some fairly stringent requirements in place, such as the school year, teaching regarding various civic and economic subjects, teacher certification and collective bargaining. Thus, what appears to be significant flexibility is perhaps not as significant in fact.

It is difficult to see how charter schools in the state are being held accountable through closures and other accountability provisions exercised to date. This leaves some fairly significant questions about quality unanswered, particularly in light of the lack of quality/performance information in this proposal.

More information about the practical relationship between the state's authorizers and its schools - particularly among local authorizers - would be helpful.

**Reader's Score: 18**

**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 number of new schools appears reasonable given the state's track record.

The addition of (and concentration on) nine secondary schools is a positive.

If executed well in the midst of presumably high levels of local political opposition, the takeover model represents a positive strategy for turning around failing traditional schools.

**Weaknesses:**

Locally-authorized charter schools are not LEAs and receive their funding through the LEA. This places an additional entity between the state and the charter schools relative to this distribution and could prevent the state from fully ensuring such funds are received in a timely manner.

No information about how funds are allocated and timely distributed in the case of a significant expansion of enrollment, has been provided.

**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 activities and milestones are clearly organized and tie back to the project's three core objectives as described in Selection Criteria I.

In general, activities appear to be appropriate to the objectives described.

Subgrant application and award procedures are described.

**Weaknesses:**

No staffing plan is provided to ensure appropriate, timely completion of stated activities.

The proposal is vague on what activities will actually consist of. For example, on page 48, second line of table, the activity is described as "collective activities in support of charter applicants." More specificity is needed. This type of support can be very broad and limited, or targeted and intense.

The next four lines in the table cited above include performance measures, not activities. It is not clear what will be done by staff and/or outside groups to achieve these measures.

On page 52, the table similarly requires more specificity about the nature of board training and level of collaboration with outside groups. These are also activities that can become quite intense and it is difficult to evaluate the level of staffing and commitment to these activities without a better understanding of what they will look like.

On page 53, in the first three rows of the chart, the applicant again includes measures in place of activities.

**Reader's Score:** 18

**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:**

An external evaluator will be used.

A clear, well-laid out logic model for evaluation is used and set forth in the appendix. The model is complete and thorough and will result in the compilation of a great deal of helpful data.

Plans for reporting on CSP and charter school effectiveness are included, ensuring meaningful public accountability.

**Weaknesses:**

The specific qualifications of the external evaluator are not specified.

More efforts to evaluate the CSP efforts and activities need to be included; efforts appear to be heavily focused on schools but need to include more emphasis on CSP activities, benchmarks and milestones.

More detailed information about deadlines and instruments could be used.

**Reader's Score:**     **23**

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**Status:**           Submitted

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

Status: Submitted

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

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Louisiana Department of Education (U282A090015)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Summary Comments</b>		
<b>Summary Comments</b>		
1. QUESTION 1	0	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	0	0
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>The contribution the charter schools grant program will make.....</b>		
1. QUESTION 2	30	22
<b>The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA ....</b>		
1. QUESTION 3	30	20
<b>The number of high-quality charter schools to be created</b>		
1. QUESTION 4	30	25
<b>The quality of the management plan...</b>		
1. QUESTION 5	30	23
<b>The quality of the evaluation plan</b>		
1. QUESTION 6	30	22
<b>Sub Total</b>	150	112
<b>Total</b>	150	112

# Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Non Dissemination: 84.282A

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

Applicant: Louisiana Department of Education (U282A090015)

## Questions

### Summary Comments - Summary Comments

#### 1. Summary Comments

##### General:

The applicant has submitted a strong proposal with clear objectives, quantifiable performance measures, and appropriate activities. The application could be strengthened by providing additional details in the management and evaluation plans.]

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 applicant has three clear objectives linked with quantifiable performance measures (p.22-29). The activities are thoroughly described and appropriate to the objectives.

The applicant intends to support the creation of six new charter high schools during the grant period (p.3). The state has formed numerous strategic partnerships to improve its schools. It has partnered with the Southern Regional Education Board to improve high schools and middle schools and has formed a strategic partnership linking charter high schools, the Louisiana Association of Charter Schools and New Leaders for New Schools to identify and share best practices (p.4-6). It has also partnered with the Louisiana Charter School Association, The Recovery School District, the Regional Education Service Centers, the High School Redesign Team, local universities and foundations to provide professional development (p.6).

The application describes some strategies promoting its grant program (p.21). The applicant will proactively get the word out about charter schools, events, and opportunities through regional information sessions, workshops, and a listserv (p. 23-24). The state publishes an annual report on charter schools (p.30).

The site visits and the requirement that schools analyze student achievement data are particularly good strategies for maintaining quality (p.27).

**Weaknesses:**

The application does not describe how it will encourage the opening of six charter high schools. The number of awareness workshops the applicant intends to conduct (six) seems low. The application does not explain why it chose a 3% annual achievement growth goal under objective three (p.26). No baseline information was given as context.

**Reader's Score: 22**

**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:**

Charter schools enjoy flexibility over budgets, governance, educational, and management models (p.20,42). The application states that charter schools are exempt from all regulations and rules other than the ones listed on pages 37 through 39. The application provides a full list of the laws that cannot be waived.

**Weaknesses:**

The Louisiana charter school law requires schools to serve a high minimum percentage of at-risk students (p.32). It is unclear what happens to schools that do not succeed in attracting and enrolling a sufficient number of at-risk students. It seems that such a requirement could be a burden.

Charter schools do not appear to have full flexibility regarding personnel. They must adhere to teacher certification requirements and collective bargaining (p.39-40). The application does not describe the administrative relationship between the authorizer and its charter schools.

**Reader's Score: 20**

**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 state of Louisiana has greatly increased the number of charter schools in the past few years by adding new authorizers (p.11). The applicant's goal is to support the opening of 35 new charter schools during the grant period. This goal is ambitious but realistic.

The Louisiana Department of Education Charter Schools Office will notify charter schools of grant opportunities (p.28). Each charter school is assigned a contact person at the department to help them with fiscal issues (p.29). The department calculates the allocation of federal funds to charter schools and ensures they receive their commensurate share (p.30).

**Weaknesses:**

It is unclear how the state will ensure commensurate funding when charter enrollment increases.

**Reader's Score:** 25

**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 application provides a management plan that links each activity with a timeline and milestones (p.48-54). It also provides a description of the subgrant process (p49-51). The proposal explains how takeover schools are eligible for additional funds and how these funds must be spent on high impact strategies (p.50).

**Weaknesses:**

The management plan does not provide descriptions of staff roles or delineate who is responsible for each activity. Some of the activities in the management plan lack specificity.

Reader's Score: 23

### 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 is committed to funding a value-added analysis to see if charter school students achieve at a higher rate than those in traditional public schools, a study that will be valuable for the state (p.59). The applicant will receive monthly and quarterly progress reports. The evaluation snapshot in the appendix sketches out the evaluation the applicant intends to refine once it has contracted with an evaluator. The snapshot provides information on the kinds of data the evaluator will collect for each performance measure.

#### Weaknesses:

The evaluation plan does not describe the qualifications of the external evaluator that will be hired to conduct the evaluation. It is unclear when evaluation reports will be available. The evaluation plan does not evaluate the charter school office's technical assistance and dissemination activities.

Reader's Score: 22

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



# Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Non Dissemination: 84.282A

Reader #4: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Louisiana Department of Education (U282A090015)

## Questions

### Summary Comments - Summary Comments

#### 1. Summary Comments

##### General:

Louisiana recognizes the important changes it can make in public education by promoting charter schools. Charters have re-defined education in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, and the Recovery School District has begun to take over failing schools, not only in New Orleans, but throughout the state, and have turned them into charter schools. Charters serve by law, a certain amount of disadvantaged students. Academic achievement to show the success of charter schools would have been helpful to further show the need for charters in Louisiana. The management plan and evaluation plan, while strong and clearly tied to objectives and performance measures, could have used more information. The application did not clearly delineate between performance measures and activities, and that needed to be explained better. Also, the explanation of the subgrant process was weak and needed more details to really highlight the application and selection process.]

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 objectives are presented in a clear manner and are associated with strong performance measures. Each performance measure contains a qualitative or analytical data point that can be measured. These objectives are ambitious, regarding the number of schools to be created (p. 22) and improving academic achievement (p. 26) for students in an admittedly poor performing state. Charter law states that a certain percentage of at-risk students must be enrolled in each charter (p. 34) to ensure that disadvantaged students are being served. With the majority of charters opening in New Orleans as part of the RSD, and the RSD taking over poor performing schools, Louisiana is focusing its charter efforts on disadvantaged students (p. 3). Louisiana has been making inroads to help students graduate from high school by implementing various strategies discussed on page 2. There is a discussion on both disseminating best practices and informing charters of the grant program on pages 28 and 31. Various meetings and conferences to encourage charter school leaders to network and share are interesting (p. 31).

**Weaknesses:**

The department does not use any innovative means to get the word out to charters about funds, and given some infrastructure problems in Louisiana, more could be done to improve upon them. More demographics data and student achievement data would have been helpful to understand how charters are helping students make gains and how they compare to conventional public schools. Some of the performance measures could be seen as activities, rather than measures.

**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 law clearly states that charter schools are exempt from all rules and regulations of the state board and the local school board (p. 37), except for standard safety and non-discrimination regulations. Charter schools' administrators and employees are allowed to exercise any power and perform any functions to properly manage charter schools (p. 40). The governing authority has the ability to hire, fire and handle all personnel matters. Schools also control their own budgets and expenditures and state-authorized charters are considered LEA's for fiscal purposes only (p. 42).

**Weaknesses:**

There are some parts of the curriculum and teaching that are not exempt, including teaching of various topics in history and civics (p. 39), which could stifle creativity. Collective bargaining rules also apply to charter schools located in these school districts (p. 40). Charter schools are not LEA's in regards to all regulations, and locally approved schools are not LEA's for anything (p. 42). There was not a strong discussion on the relationships between schools and authorizers.

**Reader's Score: 20**

**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:**

Louisiana is estimating opening 35 new charter schools throughout the time of the grant, which would significantly increase the amount of schools in the state (p. 43) in a relatively short time. There are different types of charter schools in Louisiana, and the RSD model will help to increase the number of charters in the state (p. 44). There are potentially 33 public schools that could be eligible for restructuring during the grant period. There are a variety of authorizers and means to become a charter school, due to the 5 types written in the law (p. 16) and there is an appeals process in place. The department uses web notices, email notifications and mailings to inform charters about federal funding (p. 28) and staff are in contact with charters to answer any questions (p. 29).

**Weaknesses:**

The discussion on how the SEA will ensure charters receive appropriate funding is not strong or very detailed. There is not a discussion of how funding is specifically calculated and how the department ensures that charters receive funding, especially the local school district sponsored schools that are not LEA's.

**Reader's Score: 25**

**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 charts created for each objective are very detailed and do a good job explaining who is responsible for each performance measure/activity and gives an approximate timeline and milestones for each. It is a collaborative effort between state charter school staff, local districts and the recovery district and leadership roles will be shared among all constituents, as discussed on page 46. This section does explain the subgrant process, including how much money is budgeted for each school, what the funds can be used for, and an overall discussion of the process.

**Weaknesses:**

There does not seem to be a distinction between performance measures and activities because the activities listed in the charts are the performance measures from selection criteria i. The management chart is missing essential activities to fulfill these measures and objectives. The discussion of the subgrant process is weak and could use more details to clearly understand the process from beginning to end, including how peers are chosen, what they look for in an application, and the timeline of distributing the grants.

**Reader's Score: 19**

## 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 evaluation contained in the appendix of this application is thorough and contains information on all the required sections. Each performance measure is tied to numerical benchmarks, outcome measures, timelines, data collection and a note of how this information will be used. Qualitative and quantitative data is collected for each objective and analyzed for a comprehensive snapshot of if the department is meeting its goals. Each authorizer is required to evaluate schools on academics, legal performance and financial solvency (p. 55) for individual school snapshots. There is also an external evaluation, which uses qualitative data such as interviews, site visits and compliance checks (p. 58). The three-tiered feedback system discussed on page 59 shows how this information will be used for the authorizer, stakeholders and charter schools to improve their processes.

### Weaknesses:

There was not a strong discussion of the evaluator, including how the evaluator will be found or qualifications of a potential evaluator. Evaluation plan did not evaluate the technical assistance plan or the overall effort of the department. While the chart did contain a lot of details, some categories could have been discussed in more detail, such as instruments that will be used and when, data collection method, and when reports will be available.

**Reader's Score:** 21

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

Status: Submitted

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

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Louisiana Department of Education (U282A090015)

**Reader #5:** \*\*\*\*\*

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Summary Comments</b>		
<b>Summary Comments</b>		
1. QUESTION 1	0	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	0	0
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>The contribution the charter schools grant program will make.....</b>		
1. QUESTION 2	30	24
<b>The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA ....</b>		
1. QUESTION 3	30	22
<b>The number of high-quality charter schools to be created</b>		
1. QUESTION 4	30	24
<b>The quality of the management plan...</b>		
1. QUESTION 5	30	23
<b>The quality of the evaluation plan</b>		
1. QUESTION 6	30	22
<b>Sub Total</b>	150	115
<b>Total</b>	150	115

# Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Non Dissemination: 84.282A

Reader #5: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Louisiana Department of Education (U282A090015)

## Questions

### Summary Comments - Summary Comments

#### 1. Summary Comments

##### General:

The applicant has done an excellent job on the overall grant proposal. Most of the components of the application are clear and address the criteria as stipulated by the Secretary Of Education.]

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 applicant states that all charter curriculum's must address and include the state's Content Standards in English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Science, Science, and the Arts. Each applicant seeking to establish a charter school must include a statement of which choice they will make on this curriculum issue. P-34

The applicant's charter schools are free to utilize the flexibility afforded to them by the charter school statute to uniquely design how they teach the state content standards. This flexibility allows them to be highly effective in assisting educationally disadvantaged and other students in achieving the state standards. Louisiana charter schools can, and do, tailor their educational programs and instructional methods to their targeted student populations. p-34

The Programs offered in the applicant's existing charter schools include traditional and innovative programs. They include some rigorously structured school programs such as Direct Instruction, and other alternative programs and methods such as project-based and experiential learning. p-34

The applicant's charter schools will be offering site-based, non-classroom-based, project and community-based programs, technology-based distance learning programs and more. P-35

The applicant states that to further ensure that charter schools are prepared to address the needs of at risk students, the Louisiana Charter School Program requires sub grant recipients to use a portion of their CSP funds for curriculum design

and alignment, for designing its program for serving special needs students, and for professional development. P-35

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not detail or specify what rigorous programs will be used in the project.

The applicant did not specify which site-based learning programs to be used in the program.

Several of the applicant's performance measures resembled activities rather than performance measures.

The applicant's information on best practices was more general than specific.

**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:**

The state laws are detailed and clearly outline the laws for the applicant's state. P-42

The applicant specifies that for discretionary grants or supplemental funding, state-chartered schools are treated as LEA's for fiscal purposes only and may autonomously apply for any funds for which they are eligible. Locally chartered schools receive their funds through their LEA, and the LEA competes for grants or supplemental funds on their behalf. P42

**Weaknesses:**

The provisions of collective bargaining limits the applicant's charter school autonomy.

The description of the authorizer's schools appear to be minimal.

**Reader's Score: 22**

**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 specifies that During the 2009-12 grant period, Louisiana has a goal of opening 35 new charter schools, which would bring the total number of charter schools in operation to 100 from a base of 65 in 2008. P-43

The applicant states that there are currently 33 failing schools in Louisiana that, if they do not improve their performance significantly, will become eligible for transfer to the RSD and possible restructuring as charter schools during the 2009-12 project period. P-44

The applicant specifies that The State Board of Education through its policy making actions, through its statutorily granted chartering authority, and through its Charter School Grant Program, is actively supporting and helping to implement each of these reform initiatives mentioned above. P-45

The applicant specifies that in the past, staff in the Charter School's Office will provide support and technical assistance to all charter schools in administering the federal charter school grant program and will make Louisiana's charter schools successful. p-45

**Weaknesses:**

The project does not demonstrate or detail how the state's staff will supply technical assistance.

The applicant does not detail information on how funds would be allocated or distributed equally.

**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:**

The applicant will record a snapshot of school and student data at different intervals during the school year. P47

The applicant states that the goal of the Louisiana Department of Education's charter school grant program is to increase educational opportunities for children throughout the state. The program will accomplish this, through three key performance objectives. P-47

The project will implement numerous workshops across the state, publish and distribute information via the Internet and in print, and answer questions and address concerns on an ongoing basis. It will also work closely with local and national organizations including the media. P-47

The applicant specifies that to ensure that schools plan for critical activities well in advance of school starting, CSP sub grant recipients are required to budget and spend CSP funds on a number of required fund items. These include professional development, special education program design, curriculum development, data collection and management system development, and governance. Federal charter school funds will be available to support charter schools during three stages of start-up activities. The first sub grant phase is for planning and program design in the post-charter period when a group has received final approval by a local school board or by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and after assurance that the school has an acceptable admissions policy. All schools will be eligible for up to \$200,000 in Post-Charter Sub-grant, funding. P-49

The applicant specifies that all applications are subject to a peer review process, using a rubric to score the quality of the application in a number of areas, including goals and objectives; partnership and commitment; education program; student access; professional development; implementation of time line; required uses of funds; budget; and program evaluation. P-51

**Weaknesses:**

The management plan lacked detail and appeared to be vague.

The applicant did not distinguish between performance measures and activities.

The applicant does not provide information on the descriptions the staff will hold.

The applicant does not clearly provide a staffing plan to ensure time lines.

**Reader's Score: 23**

**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 states that in Louisiana, authorizers use the state's assessment and accountability programs as objective and verifiable measures of student achievement and school performance. Additional measures of charter school quality

include financial and legal performance. P-55

The applicant specifies that in order to make fair and transparent decisions regarding contract revocations, extensions and renewals, the Louisiana Department of Education has impressed upon each local district authorizer and BESE that it is in the best interests of charter schools, students, parents and the public to articulate clear performance standards for charter schools and to evaluate each charter school's level of achievement with respect to those standards. P55

The applicant states that beyond the evaluations required by state statutes, the applicant's state will continue to use a portion of its federal funds to conduct external evaluations. In Louisiana's previously funded charter school program, funds were allocated to conduct an annual external evaluation of all charter schools. The evaluation model involved numerous site visits, surveys, compliance checks and one-on-one contacts with school personnel and stakeholders. P-58

The applicant will seek an evaluator with experience in evaluating charter school programs, using a mixed review of qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as one with organizational capacity to conduct a high-quality evaluation. The evaluation plan will incorporate elements of formative and summative evaluation. The overarching question will be whether or not charter schools have accomplished what they proposed to based on their mission and educational goals. p-60

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not discuss how the state plan would be evaluated.

The applicant in the evaluation plan does not detail how it will evaluate the charter school office's technical assistance plan.

The applicant does not state how the evaluator will be found.

**Reader's Score: 22**

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