

**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:** Tennessee Department of Education (U282A090013)

**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	15
<b>The number of high-quality charter schools to be created</b>		
1. QUESTION 4	30	20
<b>The quality of the management plan...</b>		
1. QUESTION 5	30	25
<b>The quality of the evaluation plan</b>		
1. QUESTION 6	30	17
<b>Sub Total</b>	150	99
<b>Total</b>	150	99

# Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Non Dissemination: 84.282A

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

Applicant: Tennessee Department of Education (U282A090013)

## Questions

### Summary Comments - Summary Comments

#### 1. Summary Comments

##### General:

The proposal is well organized and includes some good ideas for supporting and promoting charter schools. The limitations of the Tennessee charter school law could impede the opening of high-quality charter schools across the state. The proposal could be improved with the inclusion of a strong, comprehensive evaluation plan that covers the applicant's goals and activities.]

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:

Since the state passed its charter school law in 2002, the state has improved its capacity to support charter schools. The State Education Agency and the Tennessee charter Association have collaborated on promoting charter awareness, providing technical assistance, providing professional development and putting on events (p.9). Elementary and high school charter schools outperform the state threshold proficiency levels in reading/language arts and math (p.12). The applicant sets four clear goals for its charter school program (p.27).

With grant funds, the Office of Charter Schools will provide technical assistance workshops (p.31). The applicant has high participation goals for these workshops (p.32).

##### Weaknesses:

The state Department of Education intends to reach out to 21st Century Community Learning Centers and supplemental service providers to authorize schools (p.30). While this is an innovative approach, the applicant does not provide information about the capacity and willingness of these organizations to charter schools.

Some of the activities under the third objective lack clarity (p.33). There is little information about the Charter School Task Force, how schools will submit best practices, and dissemination activities. The applicant does not explain why it chose the achievement goals under Objective 4 (p.34). Given the at-risk population served by Tennessee charter schools, a growth measure rather than an absolute achievement level might be more appropriate.

**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 in Tennessee have some flexibility in that they can apply for waivers (p.19). Charter schools enjoy fiscal independence from the district (p.20). They can sue or be sued, contract for services, acquire property, and borrow funds (p.20). The charter governing board has control over budgets and curriculum (p.21).

**Weaknesses:**

Tennessee law limits charter school enrollment to students who attend a school that is failing, low income students, and students who have failed state tests (p.3). This significantly limits access to charter schools and restricts the areas in which charter schools can open. Charter schools are not granted automatic waivers from state and local statutes and policies; they must apply for them (p.19). Charter schools do not appear to have autonomy over personnel matters including hiring, compensation, collective bargaining or termination, unless they receive specific waivers. The application does not describe the administrative relationship between the authorizer in the charter school.

**Reader's Score:** 15

**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 intends to support the creation of 6 to 8 charter schools each year of the grant (p.30). This is ambitious given the limitations in the state's charter school law and the state's track record in opening schools.

The state Department of Education provides workshops that focus on funding issues and eligibility requirements (p.40). The Charter School Summit also provides an opportunity for schools to learn about funding issues (p.41). The state provides e-mail notices (p.41).

**Weaknesses:**

Tennessee law places significant limitations on the students that can attend charter schools and the areas in which charter schools can open. This will make it more difficult for the state to meet its goals. Only a few school districts have indicated interest in opening charter schools (p.38).

Other than by providing information, the state does not appear to proactively ensure that schools receive their commensurate level of funds by, for example, monitoring district funding or by requiring districts to submit assurances that schools receive their rightful level of formula funds.

**Reader's Score: 20**

**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 provides a description of the process for awarding charter schools with planning and implementation subgrants (p.44-45). It includes a description of the responsibilities of the Executive Director of the Office of Federal Programs, the Director of the Charter Schools and Choice office, the two consultants, the administrative secretary and others (p.50-51). The grid on pages 52 through 55 provides a clear, orderly presentation of the performance measures paired with activities and personnel.

**Weaknesses:**

The timeline for activities is unclear.

**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 partnered with the Center for Research in Education Policy at the University of Memphis for evaluation services (p.56). The applicant will hire the Center to evaluate charter school achievement and leadership (p.60). The evaluation plan provides some information about the types of data the Center will collect and how they will be analyzed.

**Weaknesses:**

The evaluation plan is missing several vital components. It does not include a process for evaluating the applicant's implementation of the four goals and performance measures it has established for this grant program. It does not have a process for measuring the applicant's implementation of the activities listed under each of the objectives. The plan does not say when reports will be available or how the applicant will use the information to improve its processes and support systems.

**Reader's Score:** 17

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





# Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Non Dissemination: 84.282A

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

Applicant: Tennessee Department of Education (U282A090013)

## Questions

### Summary Comments - Summary Comments

#### 1. Summary Comments

##### General:

The applicant has done a good 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. Please adhere to the weaknesses listed in the reviewers comments.]

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's charter schools are required to teach students who are at-risk of failure and students that are zoned to failing schools. Additionally, all of the charter schools have student poverty enrollments that exceed the state average. P-28

The applicant plans to expand the number of high-quality charter schools.

The applicant states that only one charter school has failed due to the amount of students failing the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program Gateway Examination and other common data points of the Tennessee School Report Card. p-28

The applicant states that there will be an expansion movement and through the Office of Charter Schools, the Tennessee Charter School Association and local involvement, there has been considerable movement on this front as the 2008 application window held authorizations for a girl's academy and a boy's academy. P-29

The applicant states that the program will achieve 100% charter school participation in annual site visitation and external data collection on an annual basis, 100% of charter school leaders and CFOs will attend the Fiscal Review Workshop for years one and two of their grant period, 100% of charter schools will provide evidence of at least two professional

development opportunities provided for their faculty on an annual basis, 100% of charter the schools will provide timely and accurate financial data reports to their LEA each year of their grant period, and finally 100% of charter schools will provide representation of at least 3 individuals from their governing body to be in attendance for the charter school institute in Year 1 of their grant period. P-32

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant is vague and does not detail how it will assist the educationally disadvantaged or other students to attain state standards or academic achievements.

The applicant does not detail how it will use best practices or innovative strategies to increase student achievement.

**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:**

The applicant states that many of the charter schools have employed principals that have the necessary expertise to run a specific charter school with a specific focus and demographic, yet are not certified principals. This has allowed charter schools to be expansive in thought in their consideration of what leadership qualities best address their particular charter school. IP-34

The applicant specifies that many of the charter schools offer an incentive or performance pay option to their teaching faculty. While these initiatives have been discussed at length for implementation in non-charter schools, there has been resistance at associational levels. This is not the case with charter schools, reflecting yet an additional innovative practice of the charter system and an indicator of school autonomy. IP-34

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant's charter schools do not appear to have the same autonomy as regular public schools in the district.

**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 applicant states that Tennessee will have 22 operational charter schools, with half of those being opened in the last three years. IP-36

The applicant states that at the LEA level there has been sustained discussion as to how to begin to address historically failing schools. One line of thought has been to discuss how community groups will make application to convert these schools into a charter school, with an independent governing body and a vision that can engage the student body.

The applicant states that new leadership has been put into place that is consistently choosing to view charter schools as a viable avenue of reform, rather than previous leadership attitudes that relegated charters to the outside of most policy and practice discussions. P-39

The applicant specifies that through this grant and the more favorable charter climate, Tennessee would have the ability to add six (6) charter schools per year for the first two years of the grant and eight (8) charter schools per year for the last three years of the grant, resulting in an additional thirty-six (36) charter schools over a five-year period. While this does seem like an aggressive number, historically on average Tennessee has opened approximately four (4) charter schools per year, page 40 of 60 with the most recent application window evincing a record six (6). IP-39

The applicant states that upon authorization, all charter schools are required to attend a workshop that focuses upon several issues of importance, including description of the various Titles in NCLB, their intent and eligibility requirements. This workshop is similar to the charter school institute that will address concerns relevant to the opening of a charter school; however, it will not delve deeply into student data and data management as will the institute. Workshop topics include: overview of NCLB programs; federal resources and eligibility factors; state and federal legal issues; introduction to US DOE guidance for charter schools; introduction of special education and IDEA concerns; budget preparation and reporting and; award reconciliation, spending parameters and effective internal control. MP3

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not detail how it will ensure that each school in the state will receive the school's commensurate share of federal education funds that are allocated by formula each year.

**Reader's Score: 20**

**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 states that the program will continue to provide relevant annual analysis as to the quality and performance levels of the operational side of the project as well as the programmatic side in order to achieve the highest outcomes of this project. P-41

The applicant states that there will be an annual measurement as to yearly performance levels with sub grantees in order to ensure that they are maximizing their awards in the most efficient and expedient manner while staying true to their school charter and mission: meeting and refining their methods in order to realize and articulate charter school best practices. p-41

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not clearly define milestones and performance measures.

**Reader's Score: 22**

**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 the program's state has multiple levels of data collection, evaluation and reporting that is specifically directed to understanding charter schools. With regard to this specific criterion, Tennessee historically has partnership agreements with the Center for Research in Education Policy, at the University of Memphis, which is one center of excellence within the cadre of Tennessee public higher education institutions P-54

The applicant states that the program's school level analysis is designed to provide a thorough understanding of the charter schools as individual and aggregate entities as to how they realize their charter mandates. As such, there is a focus on assessment and instruction; school climate; teacher perceptions; parental perceptions; and recommendations. This analysis uses a mixed-method design, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative primary data. P-55

The applicant also specifies that the instruments to be used are all data collection instruments that will involve the following: 1) School Observation Measure (SOM); 2) Rubric for Student-Centered Activities (RCSA); 3) School Climate

Inventory (SCI); 4) Principal Interview; 5) Teacher Focus Group; 6) Student Focus Group; 7) Charter School Teacher Questionnaire; and 8) Charter School Page 57 of 60 Parent Questionnaire. Primary data is collected via an assigned site researcher, whose duties involve major data collection responsibility for each charter school. IP-57

**Weaknesses:**

The evaluation was not directly tied to the objectives and performance measures.

The applicant does not have a systemic system for measuring performance objectives.

**Reader's Score: 18**

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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:** Tennessee Department of Education (U282A090013)

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

	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	25
<b>The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA ....</b>		
1. QUESTION 3	30	16
<b>The number of high-quality charter schools to be created</b>		
1. QUESTION 4	30	20
<b>The quality of the management plan...</b>		
1. QUESTION 5	30	25
<b>The quality of the evaluation plan</b>		
1. QUESTION 6	30	17
<b>Sub Total</b>	150	103
<b>Total</b>	150	103

# Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Non Dissemination: 84.282A

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

Applicant: Tennessee Department of Education (U282A090013)

## Questions

### Summary Comments - Summary Comments

#### 1. Summary Comments

##### General:

Tennessee is a relative newcomer to the charter school movement and has made progress in the creation of charter schools. This management plan boldly proposes to increase the number of schools by 36 in the grant's five year period. The four objectives regarding improving dissemination and student achievement are clearly explained and reasoned throughout the application. The state charter law is weak in regards to autonomy, and the enrollment requirements to attend charter schools makes it difficult to ensure everyone can be benefited by charter schools. The management plan had clear activities assigned to personnel, but was lacking in a clear timeline of when activities would be completed. The evaluation plan was also weak and could have used a lot more details as far as when data would be collected and when reports would be released. It was also unclear if the CREP would continue to evaluate the program or if there would be a new evaluator. The management plan and evaluation needed more details to be considered a strong plan to make sure that objectives and performance measures were being met.]

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 four objectives for this grant are clear, concise and the performance measures associated with each are measurable and relate to each objective (p. 30). Charter schools in Tennessee only serve a disadvantaged population due to their state charter law (p. 27). All of the charters also have student poverty enrollments that exceed the state average (p. 27). Page four of the application shows the need for secondary charters based on the number of schools that are in need of improvement in the state. There is data that charters are outperforming the state in math and reading (p. 12) and the state recognizes the need to develop high schools for under performing students. Tennessee is encouraging the expansion of charters into rural areas to serve other disadvantaged populations, and is using this grant to continue that task (p. 15). Steps taken to inform others about the grants are involved, and the various conferences and workshops hosted provide information to groups (p. 31).

**Weaknesses:**

Within the performance measures for objective one, the additional disadvantaged populations that would be served were not explicitly stated, and it would have been helpful to see how the state would expand charters. The dissemination discussion, which is part of objective three, is deemed lacking in the state, which is why it is an objective for this new grant.

**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:**

Charter schools in Tennessee have some amount of autonomy, but it is limited. Charters can apply for a waiver of any state board rule or statute that hinders the charter school's operations (p. 35). Most waivers have been in regards to personnel issues, and this allows charters to select their own staff and create performance pay or offer other incentives. The governing body of a charter school is allowed to make decisions for the school regarding daily operations (p. 37), including budget.

**Weaknesses:**

There is a very specific cohort of students that are allowed to attend charter schools, written in the state law. Essentially, only low-performing students or students attending low-performing schools are allowed to attend. This hinders the growth and flexibility of charter schools based on the population they serve (p. 18). Waivers from rules are not automatic, and it is unclear how successful charter schools have been in obtaining waivers from their LEA.

**Reader's Score:** 16

**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 charter school movement is relatively young in Tennessee, with the law passed in 2002. Based on that and the enrollment restrictions, currently having 22 charters and the goal of increasing that number by 36 over the next five years is ambitious (p. 39). This would double the amount of charters that open each year. It is interesting that the application discusses the possibility of working with community groups and higher education institutions (p. 38) to create charters and added that into its overall objectives. The discussion on notifying charter schools of federal funds was strong and discussed the different avenues that the department uses for notification (p. 40). Charters are required to attend informational workshops, and an annual summit provides additional information (p. 41).

**Weaknesses:**

Local school boards are the sole authorizer of charters, unless by appeal, and based on the number of schools that have been approved, and the overwhelming majority being located in Memphis, it is unclear whether the school boards will be receptive to approving this many charters. There was not a discussion of how funds would be guaranteed or modified for charters, except that they are supposed to receive 100% of per-pupil funds, but there was no discussion of how that is carried out (p. 19). Charters do not receive funds directly and are not their own LEA (p. 26).

**Reader's Score: 20**

**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 is very strong and the table that begins on page 52 clearly articulates performance measures, inputs and activities related to each objective. Tennessee recognizes the importance of management and evaluating the program and has assessments already in place (p. 42). The process for subgrantee awards is clearly laid out, with a strong description of the peer review selection process and reviewing process. The applicant also explains the staff and personnel associated with the Office of Charter Schools and Choice and what their roles and responsibilities will be to meet the objectives.

**Weaknesses:**

The one element missing in the management chart is a timeline and milestones to ensure completion of activities.

**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 evaluation has two levels of data analysis - school level and student achievement data. CREP has worked with the department in the past to evaluate their programs and create comprehensive annual reports about the charter school program (p. 56). Both types of analysis are very detailed and will be looking at a variety of quantitative and qualitative data, such as interviews, focus groups, observation and statistical data (p. 56). The achievement data is compared with control data of conventional public schools to make a strong argument for charter achievement (p. 57). The department is also creating a report that looks at charter school leadership and achievement (p. 58), which will be distributed to a wide variety of people.

**Weaknesses:**

While general evaluation plans are discussed in this section, the applicant did not clearly establish benchmarks, milestones, or timelines of collecting data or releasing reports. It is unclear how the leadership research component of this evaluation ties into the objectives. The overall evaluation does not directly tie into the overall objectives stated in selection criteria one.

**Reader's Score:** 17

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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:** Tennessee Department of Education (U282A090013)

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

	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	25
<b>The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA ....</b>		
1. QUESTION 3	30	17
<b>The number of high-quality charter schools to be created</b>		
1. QUESTION 4	30	22
<b>The quality of the management plan...</b>		
1. QUESTION 5	30	28
<b>The quality of the evaluation plan</b>		
1. QUESTION 6	30	18
<b>Sub Total</b>	150	110
<b>Total</b>	150	110

# Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Non Dissemination: 84.282A

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

Applicant: Tennessee Department of Education (U282A090013)

## Questions

### Summary Comments - Summary Comments

#### 1. Summary Comments

##### General:

This application is very thorough and clear; its weaknesses are in the evaluation pieces and in the lack of clarity surrounding certain statutory provisions.]

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 clear, organized and consistent with the strategic evolution of a quality statewide charter program, as demonstrated through evidence included in the proposal.

Dissemination activities are included as an objective, even though subgrant funding for dissemination is not proposed. This indicates an appropriate level of focus on this critical activity.

The current structure of Tennessee law ensures that educationally disadvantaged students will be an appropriate area of focus. Ample demographic information about these pupils and their needs is provided.

Anticipated growth appears reasonable based on the state's past track record.

##### Weaknesses:

Information about communications with parents and the public is not provided.

Some objectives and activities lack clarity.

On page 29, there is some discussion about encouraging/receiving charter applications sponsored by institutions of higher education. It does not appear that such institutions are eligible authorizers under state law; it is unclear whether the

applicant uses the term "sponsored" as in "authorized," or "sponsored" as in "developed and operated in collaboration with". Without this clarification, it is difficult to know whether a statutory change may be needed to allow for complete implementation of the CSP grant as proposed.

Additional detail on technical assistance is needed to help clarify precisely what is being proposed.

**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:**

A moderate level of flexibility exists, and a waiver process is available to support charter school innovation.

The statute indicates a commitment to flexibility and autonomy.

Charter schools appear to have a good deal of autonomy in most areas, as stated on page 37.

Accountability information (school closure) is provided on pages 11 and 28 and appears to be sound.

**Weaknesses:**

It does not appear that charter schools are LEAs.

Charter school budgets appear to be included as part of the charter contract with the LEA, which presumes some level of negotiation. If accurate, this is a diminishment of charter school autonomy.

No information about how successful charter schools have been in obtaining waivers is provided.

Charter schools can only exist in certain zones or serving certain populations of students (at-risk) pursuant to statute. This is a significant reduction in flexibility/autonomy.

**Reader's Score: 17**

**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 expansion are appropriately ambitious based on the state's track record.

Authorizing LEAs are encouraged to attend federal funding workshops with the schools they oversee. This is an intriguing innovation.

The charter school summit is a useful tool for federal funds awareness and distribution.

**Weaknesses:**

No meaningful information is provided to show how the state distributes the federal dollars available, and ensures their appropriate levels and timely receipt by charter schools. It is not clear if these funds are passed through the LEAs, or how they are allocated on an ordinary basis or in the case of a significant expansion.

**Reader's Score:** 22

**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 plan is thorough and complete, and ties back to project objectives and performance measures.

A detailed staffing description is provided. Staff assignments appear to be adequate to ensure the project's timely, effective completion.

A description of how subgrant applicants will be solicited and reviewed is included.

**Weaknesses:**

A clearer description of timelines and project milestones would be helpful, particularly related to Performance Objective 4. No obvious dates were included there, and the other dates took some digging and thinking as well.

**Reader's Score: 28**

**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 multi-layered technical review is helpful. In particular, the "harvest of primary data regarding the leadership of Tennessee charter schools" described on page 58 is very exciting.

Attainment of performance measures described in Selection Criteria IV will presumably provide further indicators of project success.

**Weaknesses:**

The performance measures critical to the project are not mentioned or referenced in this section. This is a significant opportunity missed.

There is no specific description of how the state will evaluate its own progress and efforts (survey results, feedback). The external evaluator is focused on the school performance only, rather than doing work around overall SEA program implementation.

It might have been helpful to account for the leadership report in the management plan section. This is an exciting project component and this is the first mention of it; it is not directly planned for in the work or in the objectives.

**Reader's Score: 18**

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