

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/04/2010 02:26 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Arkansas Department of Education -- Charter Schools Office, Central Administration
(U282A100002)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
(i) CSP contribution to student achievement		
1. Student achievement	30	16
Sub Total	30	16
Selection criteria		
(ii) Flexibility afforded by State law		
1. Flexibility	30	22
Sub Total	30	22
Selection Criteria		
(iii) Number of high-quality charters created		
1. Number of schools	30	21
(iv) Quality of the management plan		
1. Management plan	30	18
(v) Authorizer accountability		
1. Authorizer accountability	30	15
(vi) Dissemination activities		
1. Dissemination activities	30	16
(vii) Quality of the evaluation		
1. Evaluation	30	15
Sub Total	150	85
Total	210	123

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - 2010 84.282A - 1: 84.282A

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Arkansas Department of Education -- Charter Schools Office, Central Administration
(U282A100002)

Questions

Selection Criteria - (i) CSP contribution to student achievement

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 applicant to provide a description of the objectives for the SEA's charter school grant program and to explain 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:

Strengths

The application provides recent research-based evidence of the positive impact of Arkansas' charter schools on low-income students (p. 17, 26). Additional charter performance data is provided, revealing encouraging data for open-enrollment charter schools, but also a need to encourage higher levels of charter school performance (p. 27-8).

The state clearly identifies clear and obtainable objectives and performance measures for the grant program (p. 29-31). Objective 2 describes best practice dissemination plans.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

While the objectives seek to strengthen the state's charter sector, many of the performance measures are likely insufficient. For example, if the objective is to increase the number and type of charter schools, a performance measure that requires that less than a third of open-enrollment charter directors to report an increase in technical assistance seems weak. In addition, performance measures such as "to create a collaborative partnership in providing fiscal management and technical assistance" are vague (p. 30).

The application lacks a detailed plan to inform teachers, parents and communities about the program.

Reader's Score: 16

Selection criteria - (ii) Flexibility afforded by State law

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:

Strengths

The inclusion in the priorities section of the most common charter school waiver requests (p. 9) provides useful evidence of the flexibility granted to Arkansas' charter schools. The application provides details on the number of waivers submitted, and identifies the most common type, staff selection and compensation. Arkansas' law provides charter schools with the freedom to plan budgets, select staff, set their schedules and choose a location (p. 11).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

The inclusion of the charter application requirements is confusing (p. 32-5), and distracts from the information provided about flexibility granted to the state's charters. Based on the application, it appears that charters do not have freedom to control curriculum. In fact, the application implies that secondary school curriculum is rigidly controlled, with 38 required units of study (p. 12).

Arkansas intends to review and modify the application, grant and evaluation processes, and hopes to receive support from NACSA for these efforts. It is unclear why the state did not undertake these efforts before submitting the grant proposal (p. 36-7).

In addition, the applicant unnecessarily provided broad statements of charter policy and trends in the priorities section of the application (p. 8, 16). A tight focus on the state's charter school experience throughout the application would be more useful.

Reader's Score: 22

Selection Criteria - (iii) Number of high-quality charters 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:

Strengths

Arkansas sets an ambitious goal of almost doubling the number of charter schools in five years, from 29 to 54 (p. 37) and identifies outreach, technical assistance and grant award steps necessary to reach the goal. The state provides assurance that changes will be made to help charter schools receive federal funds (p. 42).

In addition, the application describes the factors that resulted in past growth in the charter sector, as well as a helpful chronology table (p. 5). The information provided about the restrictive nature of the original charter legislation, and the 2005 amendment raising the cap, provides additional background information. The application includes a thorough analysis of the state's geographic needs and opportunities for charter schools.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Although the application adequately describes the state's anticipated technical assistance model, the "upgrades" the charter office intends to make sound like basic SEA services (e.g., work collaboratively with other key department staff; seek input from the school directors, provide phone conferences with school).

Most importantly, the state's ability to increase the number of high-quality charter schools is inhibited by the cap on the number of "open-enrollment" charter schools (p. 6). The application inadequately identifies anticipated partnerships for creating high-quality charter schools in Arkansas. Although the ADE identifies potential partners to help encourage high school charter applications, they are largely traditional public school-oriented organizations, such as the Arkansas School Boards Association (p. 12).

Reader's Score: 21

Selection Criteria - (iv) 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:

Strengths

The management plan adequately describes the anticipated technical assistance and sub-grant award process (p. 45-6). The application includes a table listing anticipated activities, target dates and responsible parties for each performance measure (p. 48-51). GPRA performance measures for number of charter schools and student proficiency targets are included.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

The management plan is very focused on process, such as providing technical assistance, ensuring a certain number of informational sessions and conducting monitoring sessions. The performance measures do not identify the change expected to result from each objective. Many activities are simply statements of basic SEA charter oversight duties, rather than additional activities that will be undertaken to meet objectives.

Reader's Score: 18

Selection Criteria - (v) Authorizer accountability

- 1. The SEA's plan to monitor and hold accountable authorized public chartering agencies through such activities as providing technical assistance or establishing a professional development program, which may include providing authorized public chartering agency staff with training and assistance on**

planning and systems development, so as to improve the capacity of those agencies to authorize, monitor, and hold accountable charter schools.

Strengths:

Strengths

The SEA communicates two goals: (1) develop a Charter Review Council and (2) hold work-sessions with the State Board of Education staff. ADE hopes to work with NACSA to enhance the state's authorizing process.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

The application provided a very short and insufficient answer. Under state law, the Arkansas Board of Education is the only authorizer in the state (p. 7), but the local districts review and approve charter applications and send the findings to the state. The application did not acknowledge the opportunity to provide authorizing training and technical assistance to the districts.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - (vi) Dissemination activities

1. In the case of SEAs that propose to use grant funds to support dissemination activities under section 5204(f)(6) of the ESEA:

Reader's Score: 16

Sub Question

1. In the case of SEAs that propose to use grant funds to support dissemination activities under section 5204(f)(6) of the ESEA,
 - (a) the quality of the dissemination activities.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the steps to be taken by the SEA to award these funds to eligible applicants, including a description of the peer review process the SEA will use to review applications for dissemination, the timelines for awarding such funds, and how the SEA will assess the quality of the applications.

Strengths:

Strengths

The application adequately describes plans to distribute 10 dissemination sub-grants, two each year, through a committee review process. The activities could include developing curriculum based on successful practices, developing partnerships or conducting evaluations and materials that document successful practices.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

The application unnecessarily provides dissemination activities that the ADE plans to undertake. The intended activities in some ways undermine the application, as the list includes many items the SEA should already have completed. For example, the SEA already should have a listserv of public charter school directors (p. 56).

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 8

2. In the case of SEAs that propose to use grant funds to support dissemination activities under section 5204 (f)(6) of the ESEA,

(b) the likelihood that those activities will improve student academic achievement.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the steps to be taken by the SEA to award these funds to eligible applicants, including descriptions of the peer review process the SEA will use to review applications for dissemination, the timelines for awarding such funds, and how the SEA will assess the quality of the applications.

Strengths:

Strengths

ADE outlines clear award criteria, including a heavily-weighted criteria of demonstration of student achievement. The application states that the activities must "be aligned with the overall expectations for student learning."

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

The application lacks a plan for the possibility of only receiving dissemination activities from unqualified schools.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - (vii) Quality of the evaluation

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

Note: 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 will serve as evaluator and to describe the qualifications of the 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:

Strengths

The budget appears to devote an appropriate level of resources to project evaluation.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

The state has not identified an evaluator and does not identify the qualifications they want the future evaluator to meet (p. 57). The application insufficiently develops an evaluation plan with only cursory statements of evaluation design and data

collection (p. 58-9). Although the application states that the evaluation will be aligned with project objectives, it does not provide details about the alignment or identify benchmarks to measure progress toward objectives.

Reader's Score: 15

Status: Submitted

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Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/08/2010 08:07 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Arkansas Department of Education -- Charter Schools Office, Central Administration
(U282A100002)

Reader #4: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
(i) CSP contribution to student achievement		
1. Student achievement	30	17
Sub Total	30	17
Selection criteria		
(ii) Flexibility afforded by State law		
1. Flexibility	30	30
Sub Total	30	30
Selection Criteria		
(iii) Number of high-quality charters created		
1. Number of schools	30	25
(iv) Quality of the management plan		
1. Management plan	30	17
(v) Authorizer accountability		
1. Authorizer accountability	30	17
(vi) Dissemination activities		
1. Dissemination activities	30	17
(vii) Quality of the evaluation		
1. Evaluation	30	15
Sub Total	150	91
Total	210	138

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - 2010 84.282A - 1: 84.282A

Reader #4: *****

Applicant: Arkansas Department of Education -- Charter Schools Office, Central Administration
(U282A100002)

Questions

Selection Criteria - (i) CSP contribution to student achievement

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 applicant to provide a description of the objectives for the SEA's charter school grant program and to explain 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 application presents the 2009 CREDO report offering substantial evidence to support the contributions that the charter school grant program has made in providing educational choices to students in Arkansas.

The application proposes clear academic standards, professional development guidelines, student assessment requirements, public reporting requirements and school accountability procedures within the States comprehensive plan supporting students, teachers and administrators; Smart Arkansas.

The application demonstrates other assessment activities conducted by ADE such as participation in national charter school conferences to keep staff networked and current around best practices. Site visits, research around other states best practices and communication within the other ADE departments demonstrates experience and ongoing commitment to assessment activities.

The application proposes clear and measurable objectives for assisting educational disadvantaged and other youth in achieving state academic content standards. Specifically, to promote greater parental choice and enhance educational opportunities by awarding six planning grants to support high quality charter schools. Additionally, to contribute to the knowledge base around best practices in charter schools by providing two dissemination grants. This application proposes at least one board training session and two coordinated workshops per year to support sound fiscal management. The proposal also includes clear expectation and measurement around increased student academic achievement.

Weaknesses:

The application lacks clarity around tasks and strategies to accomplish object 4, to increase student academic achievement.

Reader's Score: 17

Selection criteria - (ii) Flexibility afforded by State law

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 Arkansas are granted a high level of autonomy. Prospective public charter school applicants are given the opportunity to request waivers around any department rule. 649 waiver requests were submitted by 29 charter schools.

Weaknesses:

None noted

Reader's Score: 30

Selection Criteria - (iii) Number of high-quality charters 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 provides comprehensive technical assistance sessions around federal program access. Specifically, working collaboratively with other ADE department staff to ensure appropriate technical assistance and phone conferences with charter schools that need immediate assistance.

Arkansas public law requires that a public charter school receives the eligible federal funds within five months after the school opens. Additionally, the public law requires that expanding enrollment schools receive their commensurate share of federal funds.

Weaknesses:

The proposal recognizes challenges that many charter schools face in securing their share of federal funds. However, the application lacks clarity around the upgraded TA model that will address this issue.

Reader's Score: 25

Selection Criteria - (iv) 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 proposes a clear and reasonable department structure to guarantee the objectives, performance measures and outcomes within the project.

The application proposes clear and measurable performance measures within the CSP Management Plan and Timeline, page 48.

Weaknesses:

The application proposes an inadequate description of the sub-grantee and award process. The application is lacking a description of reader training and process. Additionally, there is no description of a peer review process, scoring calibration or inter-rater reliability.

Reader's Score: 17

Selection Criteria - (v) Authorizer accountability

1. **The SEA's plan to monitor and hold accountable authorized public chartering agencies through such activities as providing technical assistance or establishing a professional development program, which may include providing authorized public chartering agency staff with training and assistance on planning and systems development, so as to improve the capacity of those agencies to authorize, monitor, and hold accountable charter schools.**

Strengths:

The application proposes an evaluation of current authorizing process by NACSA. The expectation around this evaluation is to align the states authorizing processes with the Principles and Standards for Quality Public Charter School Authorizing as published by NACSA.

Weaknesses:

The application lacks detail around activities to hold accountable authorized public chartering agencies. The description of the Charter Review Council inadequately describes a system of planning and development to improve the capacity of agencies to authorize, monitor and hold accountable charter schools.

Reader's Score: 17

Selection Criteria - (vi) Dissemination activities

1. **In the case of SEAs that propose to use grant funds to support dissemination activities under section 5204(f)(6) of the ESEA:**

Reader's Score: 17

Sub Question

1. In the case of SEAs that propose to use grant funds to support dissemination activities under section 5204(f)(6) of the ESEA,
 - (a) the quality of the dissemination activities.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the steps to be taken by the SEA to award these funds to eligible applicants, including a description of the peer review process the SEA will use to review applications for dissemination, the timelines for awarding such funds, and how the SEA will assess the quality of the applications.

Strengths:

The application provides information about criteria for awarding sub-grants such as demonstrated evidence of student achievement, effective management and leadership and parent and staff satisfaction. The application describes elements that the subgrantee must propose to carry out one of more of the following activities: developing materials that promote increased student achievement and are based on successful practices and developing partnerships with other public schools.

Weaknesses:

The application presents several activities ADE has conducted in the past to inform parents, educators, and other key stakeholders about the processes involved in applying for public charter school status. However, the application provides limited strategies around informing potential applicants about the dissemination grant opportunity.

Reader's Score: 9

2. In the case of SEAs that propose to use grant funds to support dissemination activities under section 5204 (f)(6) of the ESEA,
 - (b) the likelihood that those activities will improve student academic achievement.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the steps to be taken by the SEA to award these funds to eligible applicants, including descriptions of the peer review process the SEA will use to review applications for dissemination, the timelines for awarding such funds, and how the SEA will assess the quality of the applications.

Strengths:

The application presents an adequate description of eligibility criteria and activities likely to improve student academic achievement. The criteria are designed to ensure that only schools with a demonstrated and consistent track record of promoting student achievement and meeting or exceeding AYP benchmarks are used as models for other schools to emulate.

Weaknesses:

The application does not provide a description of the review process for funding high quality dissemination sub-grants.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - (vii) Quality of the evaluation

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

Note: 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 will serve as evaluator and to describe the qualifications of the 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 application proposes a clear plan to engage an evaluator around the project objectives in an annual formative review. The evaluation will investigate the effectiveness of the CSP objectives, project measures, and outcomes through the use of qualitative and quantitative data.

Weaknesses:

The application does not identify the individual and or organization that will serve as evaluator and does not describe the qualification criteria for the evaluator. The plan lacks discussion regarding the methods that will be used, instruments that will be developed and how the data will be analyzed.

Reader's Score: 15

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 06/08/2010 08:07 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/04/2010 10:21 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Arkansas Department of Education -- Charter Schools Office, Central Administration
(U282A100002)

Reader #5: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
(i) CSP contribution to student achievement		
1. Student achievement	30	20
Sub Total	30	20
Selection criteria		
(ii) Flexibility afforded by State law		
1. Flexibility	30	22
Sub Total	30	22
Selection Criteria		
(iii) Number of high-quality charters created		
1. Number of schools	30	23
(iv) Quality of the management plan		
1. Management plan	30	15
(v) Authorizer accountability		
1. Authorizer accountability	30	17
(vi) Dissemination activities		
1. Dissemination activities	30	18
(vii) Quality of the evaluation		
1. Evaluation	30	15
Sub Total	150	88
Total	210	130

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - 2010 84.282A - 1: 84.282A

Reader #5: *****

Applicant: Arkansas Department of Education -- Charter Schools Office, Central Administration
(U282A100002)

Questions

Selection Criteria - (i) CSP contribution to student achievement

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 applicant to provide a description of the objectives for the SEA's charter school grant program and to explain 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:

Application presents a strong case for effectiveness of current AK charter schools and their success in boosting academic achievement (16-25). The application presents solid project objectives (28-31).

Weaknesses:

The case for why program will enhance charter effectiveness or how is not made well (16-25). Objectives are not well linked to each other (i.e., lack internal coherence) and are vague as to what specifically will happen (28-31). Performance measures lack specificity and measurability in most cases (28-31).

Reader's Score: 20

Selection criteria - (ii) Flexibility afforded by State law

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:

Nature and kinds of flexibility of charter schools well described and supported in statute (32-35).

Weaknesses:

Neither the statute nor the application explains whether or how charters have flexibility in educational program (32-36).

Reader's Score: 22

Selection Criteria - (iii) Number of high-quality charters 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:

Descriptions of the technical assistance strategies and activities show a well-targeted approach (40-42). Bringing in an external evaluator will promote objectivity and perhaps rigor ((43). Establishing cooperative relations with other departments should help reinforce the effectiveness of the activities (40).

Weaknesses:

Question whether the charter schools office has enough influence and authority to establish cooperative relations and deploy resources from other departments (40). No elaboration of the Charter Review Council: who they are, what are their credentials, what are criteria for being member (39).

Reader's Score: 23

Selection Criteria - (iv) 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:

Have identified dedicated staff for this project (44-45).

Weaknesses:

Given the scope of responsibilities, the project may be understaffed (44-45). Lack of detail regarding the operations of the Charter Review Committee: review process, rubrics, members, qualifications of members, same as Council, etc. (46). Management Plan chart is often confusing and does not account for some points made in narrative: e.g., no mention of review committee, who is program advisor? (48-51).

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - (v) Authorizer accountability

1. The SEA's plan to monitor and hold accountable authorized public chartering agencies through such activities as providing technical assistance or establishing a professional development program, which may include providing authorized public chartering agency staff with training and assistance on planning and systems development, so as to improve the capacity of those agencies to authorize, monitor, and hold accountable charter schools.

Strengths:

Involving NACSA will help ensure some external validity to the monitoring processes (52).

Weaknesses:

Proposed NACSA involvement is not reflected in the budget as either a cost or in-kind (Budget Narrative). Although depicted as crucial, the application does not present contingencies should NACSA involvement not materialize (52). The Review Council plays a central role in monitoring but there is scant detail as to who is on this council and what are the criteria/qualifications for membership (52).

Reader's Score: 17

Selection Criteria - (vi) Dissemination activities

1. In the case of SEAs that propose to use grant funds to support dissemination activities under section 5204(f)(6) of the ESEA:

Reader's Score: 18

Sub Question

1. In the case of SEAs that propose to use grant funds to support dissemination activities under section 5204(f)(6) of the ESEA,
 - (a) the quality of the dissemination activities.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the steps to be taken by the SEA to award these funds to eligible applicants, including a description of the peer review process the SEA will use to review applications for dissemination, the timelines for awarding such funds, and how the SEA will assess the quality of the applications.

Strengths:

Application adequately describes the criteria for sub-grant eligibility (52).

Weaknesses:

Dissemination strategies and activities seem like they should be part of the charter school offices standard operating procedures; that is they do not go very far beyond what might be expected ordinarily (53-56).

Reader's Score: 9

Sub Question

2. In the case of SEAs that propose to use grant funds to support dissemination activities under section 5204 (f)(6) of the ESEA,
- (b) the likelihood that those activities will improve student academic achievement.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the steps to be taken by the SEA to award these funds to eligible applicants, including descriptions of the peer review process the SEA will use to review applications for dissemination, the timelines for awarding such funds, and how the SEA will assess the quality of the applications.

Strengths:

Assuming the funds are adequate and well-spent by the recipients, the impact of the described activities should produce the expectations outlined in this section and the management section (53-56, 48-51)

Weaknesses:

Dissemination activities seem under-funded at \$1000/month (Budget Narrative). Goals for the dissemination activities seem modest (53-56, 48-51).

Reader's Score: 9

Selection Criteria - (vii) Quality of the evaluation

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

Note: 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 will serve as evaluator and to describe the qualifications of the 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:

Bringing in an external evaluator will promote objectivity and perhaps rigor (57).

Weaknesses:

There is no evaluation activity in the management plan (48-51). The evaluation plan is poorly presented and does not describe most of the fundamental components of evaluation such as methods, conceptual framework, rubrics and protocols, data collection and analysis strategies, etc. (58-59).

Reader's Score: 15

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 06/04/2010 10:21 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/23/2010 09:06 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Arkansas Department of Education -- Charter Schools Office,Central Administration
(U282A100002)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
(i) CSP contribution to student achievement		
1. Student achievement	30	25
Sub Total	30	25
Selection criteria		
(ii) Flexibility afforded by State law		
1. Flexibility	30	22
Sub Total	30	22
Selection Criteria		
(iii) Number of high-quality charters created		
1. Number of schools	30	23
(iv) Quality of the management plan		
1. Management plan	30	22
(v) Authorizer accountability		
1. Authorizer accountability	30	8
(vi) Dissemination activities		
1. Dissemination activities	30	16
(vii) Quality of the evaluation		
1. Evaluation	30	12
Sub Total	150	81
Total	210	128

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - 2010 84.282A - 1: 84.282A

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Arkansas Department of Education -- Charter Schools Office, Central Administration
(U282A100002)

Questions

Selection Criteria - (i) CSP contribution to student achievement

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 applicant to provide a description of the objectives for the SEA's charter school grant program and to explain 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 well written and evidence based discussion of what the applicant has done and proposes to do in the future to expand opportunities is a strength. The applicant makes a strong argument that past success is best indicator of future success with educational disadvantaged students.

Weaknesses:

The lengthy discussion about reserach on disadvantaged students limits discussion of specific plans to serve this targeted population. The applicant reflects on who charters will serve but does not drill down on who will be served by the proposed grant. It is unclear exactly who the state hopes to serve. There is a detailed discussion about performance measures and anticipated outcomes but the application lacks a clearly articulated plan for how outcomes will be achieved.

Reader's Score: 25

Selection criteria - (ii) Flexibility afforded by State law

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 law extends notable autonomy to charter schools The detailed description of charter applicant requirements provides relevant background. The applicant provides evidence of flexibility related to hiring.

Weaknesses:

The waiver requirement may inhibit flexibility. The table on page 35 describes specific programs in charter schools but does not help the reader make the connection between specific types of flexibility and the programs mentioned. It is unclear based on Table 9 exactly how many of these waivers have actually been extended/approved

Reader's Score: 22

Selection Criteria - (iii) Number of high-quality charters 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 outlines ambitious goals to grow the sector from 29 to 54 schools and specific plan to target communities with schools in need of improvement. The three step process to encourage growth is a strength. In particular, the acknowledgement about the need for an enhanced TA approach is a strength.

Weaknesses:

It would have been helpful to have seen more details about some of the barriers that have limited growth in the past and detailed strategies to change the climate. The language on page 37 regarding licenses is confusing. The application required more details about the suggested technical assistance for potential applicants.

Reader's Score: 23

Selection Criteria - (iv) 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 describes a strong management plan in which an experienced educator will manage the initiative. The management plan and timeline are easy to understand and follow.

Weaknesses:

The plan lacks detail and specificity reflecting the Arkansas policy context. For instance, the plan provides an outline of activities but little detail about management of the activities or potential relationship to other department initiatives/priorities (e.g., SIG program for low-performing schools).

There is inadequate detail about the review committee that will be responsible for awarding sub-grants to charter developers.

Reader's Score: 22

Selection Criteria - (v) Authorizer accountability

- 1. The SEA's plan to monitor and hold accountable authorized public chartering agencies through such activities as providing technical assistance or establishing a professional development program, which may include providing authorized public chartering agency staff with training and assistance on planning and systems development, so as to improve the capacity of those agencies to authorize, monitor, and hold accountable charter schools.**

Strengths:

The potential collaboration with NACSA is a strength.

Weaknesses:

The application does not contain a specific budget line item to support collaboration with NACSA. The lack of appropriate attention to this important component is a weakness. The single authorizer represents a significant challenge for accountability. The application does not provide a description of how the state plans to hold the authorizer accountable for performance. There is a description about how schools will be held accountable but not the authorizer.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - (vi) Dissemination activities

- 1. In the case of SEAs that propose to use grant funds to support dissemination activities under section 5204(f)(6) of the ESEA:**

Reader's Score: 16

Sub Question

- 1. In the case of SEAs that propose to use grant funds to support dissemination activities under section 5204(f)(6) of the ESEA,**
 - (a) the quality of the dissemination activities.**

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the steps to be taken by the SEA to award these funds to eligible applicants, including a description of the peer review process the SEA will use to review applications for dissemination, the timelines for awarding such funds, and how the SEA will assess the quality of the applications.

Sub Question

Strengths:

The criteria for selection of dissemination grantees appears rigorous and reflects key priorities outlined in the grant regulations.

Weaknesses:

The lack of detail about the committee review process is a weakness. It is unclear how the website will contribute to the process and it appears to be a missed opportunity to disseminate innovative content developed specific to Arkansas policy context.

The lack of specificity about how sub-grantees will be overseen makes it difficult to fully understand the process.

Reader's Score: 8

2. In the case of SEAs that propose to use grant funds to support dissemination activities under section 5204 (f)(6) of the ESEA,

(b) the likelihood that those activities will improve student academic achievement.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the steps to be taken by the SEA to award these funds to eligible applicants, including descriptions of the peer review process the SEA will use to review applications for dissemination, the timelines for awarding such funds, and how the SEA will assess the quality of the applications.

Strengths:

The commitment to dissemination activities reflected in the grant application is a strength and the dissemination of promising practices holds promise to improve instructional practice.

Weaknesses:

It is unclear how rank and file charter schools/students will benefit from ADE personnel attending national conferences. The lack of detail about the network of support is a weakness. It is unclear who will lead the network and what they will do given the budget (\$20,000).

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - (vii) Quality of the evaluation

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

Note: 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 will serve as evaluator and to describe the qualifications of the 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 identifies specific activities the evaluator will assess and specific deliverables are identified. Table 5 (pg 58) outlines specific measures that will be assessed as part of the evaluation.

Weaknesses:

The lack of details about how evaluator will be selected is a significant weakness. It is unclear who in the Department will direct/manage the evaluation and how the line between authorizer oversight and program evaluation will be drawn. The lack of information about the charter review council is a weakness. It is unclear what authority they will have.

Reader's Score: 12

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 06/23/2010 09:06 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/28/2010 10:39 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Arkansas Department of Education -- Charter Schools Office, Central Administration
(U282A100002)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
(i) CSP contribution to student achievement		
1. Student achievement	30	28
Sub Total	30	28
Selection criteria		
(ii) Flexibility afforded by State law		
1. Flexibility	30	27
Sub Total	30	27
Selection Criteria		
(iii) Number of high-quality charters created		
1. Number of schools	30	23
(iv) Quality of the management plan		
1. Management plan	30	23
(v) Authorizer accountability		
1. Authorizer accountability	30	14
(vi) Dissemination activities		
1. Dissemination activities	30	12
(vii) Quality of the evaluation		
1. Evaluation	30	14
Sub Total	150	86
Total	210	141

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - 2010 84.282A - 1: 84.282A

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Arkansas Department of Education -- Charter Schools Office, Central Administration
(U282A100002)

Questions

Selection Criteria - (i) CSP contribution to student achievement

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 applicant to provide a description of the objectives for the SEA's charter school grant program and to explain 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:

Good references to existing publications and research. Strong connection between national and state attention to assisting educationally disadvantaged students. Reference to previous and ongoing efforts regarding academic achievement standards. Strong connection between existing strategies and objectives. Strong development between overall strategy and application of charters as reform strategy.

Weaknesses:

More clarification on operational capacity/scope of open enrollment and conversion schools.

Reader's Score: 28

Selection criteria - (ii) Flexibility afforded by State law

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:

Examples of school autonomy well-articulated and presented. Listing of flexibility and waiver requests. Reference to solicitation from NACSA is referenced.

Weaknesses:

Relationship between charter and authorizer needs further articulation. How has the law developed the relationship? What have been the outcomes? Are the schools cited in Table 3 high performing? How long have they been in

operation?

Reader's Score: 27

Selection Criteria - (iii) Number of high-quality charters 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:

Development of review, evaluation and sanctions for low-performing schools. Planning to grow the number of charter schools from 29-54 over a 5-year period. Good emphasis on working with charters once they are up and running. Legal citation of federal funding.

Weaknesses:

More definition on the outreach strategy needed. Proposing to give planning applications to grantees in areas of largest concentration of need. More information on where those concentrations are needed. How to cultivate grantees for those areas? Definition of "key personnel" for RFP review is needed. Reference to collaboration is cited throughout, yet there is limited definition of how and what this entails. Also, what strategies have/have not worked in the past. How will this be different?

Reader's Score: 23

Selection Criteria - (iv) 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:

Identification of personnel staff included. Project timeline included with activities.

Weaknesses:

Unsure as to how project timeline encourages a continuum over five years. How does year one inform successive years? Need more information as to how milestones will be met. How do activities support the larger picture as a composite.

Reader's Score: 23

Selection Criteria - (v) Authorizer accountability

1. The SEA's plan to monitor and hold accountable authorized public chartering agencies through such activities as providing technical assistance or establishing a professional development program, which may include providing authorized public chartering agency staff with training and assistance on planning and systems development, so as to improve the capacity of those agencies to authorize, monitor, and hold accountable charter schools.

Strengths:

Inclusion of work sessions and evaluation through NACSA.

Weaknesses:

As ADE is sole authorizer, how will work sessions provide more developed systems within ADE? What has worked/has not worked in the past? How does year 1 inform years 2 through 5? How does the outcome of the evaluation process remain crucial if ADE does not have systemic buy-in? In comparison, this section is less developed than rest of application. As sole authorizer, this could be more developed.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - (vi) Dissemination activities

1. In the case of SEAs that propose to use grant funds to support dissemination activities under section 5204(f)(6) of the ESEA:

Reader's Score: 12

Sub Question

1. In the case of SEAs that propose to use grant funds to support dissemination activities under section 5204(f)(6) of the ESEA,
 - (a) the quality of the dissemination activities.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the steps to be taken by the SEA to award these funds to eligible applicants, including a description of the peer review process the SEA will use to review applications for dissemination, the timelines for awarding such funds, and how the SEA will assess the quality of the applications.

Strengths:

Previous experience detailed. Good content intended for dissemination activities. Developed process.

Weaknesses:

Methods to ensure adequate participation and accountability need further development.

Reader's Score: 7

2. In the case of SEAs that propose to use grant funds to support dissemination activities under

Sub Question

section 5204 (f)(6) of the ESEA,

(b) the likelihood that those activities will improve student academic achievement.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the steps to be taken by the SEA to award these funds to eligible applicants, including descriptions of the peer review process the SEA will use to review applications for dissemination, the timelines for awarding such funds, and how the SEA will assess the quality of the applications.

Strengths:

Emphasis on consistent strengths and best practices.

Weaknesses:

Difficult to assess likelihood of impact on student achievement.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - (vii) Quality of the evaluation

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data.**

Note: 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 will serve as evaluator and to describe the qualifications of the 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:

Use of external evaluator listed. Evaluations will be on an annual basis.

Weaknesses:

Designed as participatory in nature, yet this is undefined or further developed. Evaluation refers to qualitative and quantitative methods but does not suggest what statistical methods will be applied. How is this evaluation different from non-charter evaluations? What evidence can demonstrate overall value (broadly defined) that charter schools make in the educational landscape. This section needs to be a stronger component of the application.

Reader's Score: 14

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/28/2010 10:39 AM

