

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/15/2010 10:08 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Colorado Department of Education (U282A100015)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
(i) CSP contribution to student achievement		
1. Student achievement	30	25
(ii) Flexibility afforded by state law		
1. Flexibility	30	22
(iii) Number of high-quality charters created		
1. Number of schools	30	25
(iv) Quality of the management plan		
1. Management plan	30	25
(v) Authorizer accountability		
1. Authorizer accountability	30	27
(vii) Quality of the evaluation		
1. Evaluation	30	23
Sub Total	180	147
Total	180	147

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - 2010 84.282A - 2: 84.282A

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Colorado Department of Education (U282A100015)

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

Colorado has a strong plan in place to provide technical assistance and support to developers wishing to open a new charter school, as well as ongoing technical assistance to operating charter schools. (p. 7)

State has adopted new accreditation requirement, new growth model, new content standards, and a new school performance framework. (p.11)

New standards include postsecondary and workforce readiness outcomes. (p. 12)

There is good collaboration between the Department of Education, the League, some districts, and the Charter School institute. (p. 12)

RFP requires potential schools to describe how they will recruit and serve the needs of low income and at-risk students.

Overall, the application indicates that the state has a strong competitive RFP process.

A very strong system of support and technical assistance, especially the Charter School Support Initiative.

Colorado has implemented a statewide training program for charter application reviewers, which will help to ensure consistency and rigor in the application review process. (p. 26)

The plan for the Board Presidents Network will likely increase capacity. (p. 27)

The mentoring program for administrators will also likely increase capacity. (p. 27)

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Objective 1 is unfocused and too broad. (p. 13)

Objective 2 is broad, and may be difficult to measure. (p. 22)

The application includes a plan for implementing a turnaround model for failing charters, which seems to contradict the concept of strong system of accountability. (p. 27)

Objective 2 includes only a one day workshop for teachers, which seems unlikely to result in achievement of the desired outcomes.

Overall, the application seems to place very little emphasis on the educationally disadvantaged. There are no incentives for schools to address this need.

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:

Strengths

Colorado's state law includes automatic waivers (pp. 37-38)

The state has been recognized by both West Ed and the Center for Educational Reform reports as having a strong law that provides charters with autonomy. (p.38)

Charters are not subject to local zoning and building regulations (p. 38)

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

The application seems to indicate that schools are required to use only district approved educational programs. (p. 37)

Waivers seem to be limited to a select few areas, with additional waivers needing approval.

Schools not automatically exempt from district policy (p. 38)

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

The application provides a reasonable estimate based on past growth (p. 39)

The state provides charters with Distribution of federal formula funding spreadsheet and a definition of significant expansion. (p.39)

The state provides for a periodic review by Federal Program Unit to ensure charters are receiving their share of federal funds. (p. 39)

The application details a strong peer review process, which is likely to ensure that only high-quality applications are approved.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

More active efforts surrounding federal funding could further ensure that charter schools receive their commensurate share.

The application does not include a definition of what constitutes a high-quality charter school.

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:

Strengths

The peer review process, which is explained in previous section, is strong. (p. 15)

The management grid is detailed, and provides sufficient information on benchmarks and timelines.

The staff involved are highly capable and have the experience to implement the program as described.

Student Achievement measures are precise and will allow for mid-course reviews.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Many of the measures are process measures, and do not measure change in behavior, practice, or attitudes.

No measures aligned with graduation rates, and college/career readiness, which is a part of the states objectives.

Reader's Score: 25

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 Resource handbooks developed by CDE related to best practices, will be distributed to authorizers (p. 23)

The Authorizers Handbook is a good idea which will likely increase capacity. (p. 23)

Authorizer training luncheons focusing on proposed quality standards, charter application process, contracting, renewal process, monitoring, oversight, replication,- offered regionally, five times a year.

Application reviewer training will help to ensure high quality applications are approved. (p. 25)

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

The states plan for evaluation of changes in authorizer practices is limited to self-reporting of improved policies.

There are limited specific measurable outcomes associated with increased capacity.

Reader's Score: 27

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 evaluator is competent and capable.

The application includes a plan to survey charter school leaders and authorizers, with plans to assess knowledge penetration and changes in practices.

Statistical data on student achievement is strong and aligns with objective one (1).

Formative data used to modify program during project period.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

No outcome measures related to college/career readiness, although that is a major part of objective one (1).

Reader's Score: **23**

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 06/15/2010 10:08 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/05/2010 04:49 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Colorado Department of Education (U282A100015)

Reader #5: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
(i) CSP contribution to student achievement		
1. Student achievement	30	20
(ii) Flexibility afforded by state law		
1. Flexibility	30	26
(iii) Number of high-quality charters created		
1. Number of schools	30	25
(iv) Quality of the management plan		
1. Management plan	30	20
(v) Authorizer accountability		
1. Authorizer accountability	30	23
(vii) Quality of the evaluation		
1. Evaluation	30	23
Sub Total	180	137
Total	180	137

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - 2010 84.282A - 2: 84.282A

Reader #5: *****

Applicant: Colorado Department of Education (U282A100015)

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

Colorado has adopted two objectives in order to assist educationally disadvantaged and other students achieve State academic content standards: "Increase the number of new high-quality public charter schools that enable all students to achieve state content standards, graduate from high school, and enter college or a career with the requisite knowledge and skills to succeed"; and "Build capacity among authorizers, board members, administrators and teachers at new and existing charter schools to conduct quality authorizing, exert effective school leadership, and engage in high-impact teaching so that students will achieve state content standards, graduate from high school and enter college or a career with the requisite knowledge and skills to succeed" (pages 13,21). The grant will assist Colorado in establishing new high quality charter schools through increasing capacity among authorizers and providing technical assistance to charter schools which are struggling.

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) relies upon the "Start a Colorado Charter" web site to inform the public of the sub-grant program and other activities funded by federal and state funds. For those already involved in the charter school process there are regular emails and weekly ListServ information on "federal, state, local and private funding opportunities, upcoming conferences, meetings, seminars, new research, legislative changes, and other resources" (page 7). The CDE distributes a regular newsletter to superintendents and district staff statewide.

The CDE has established a Schools of Choice Unit that provides professional development for charter school Business Managers and an annual Finance Seminar where information regarding the availability of federal funds is provided.

The CDE has included in its web site an "extensive online library of materials, sample documents, research studies, and handbooks used in high performing Colorado charter schools" (page 8).

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESSES

Data presented regarding charter school student academic achievement doesn't clearly indicate that attending a charter school increases the likelihood that a student will achieve state academic standards. "Charter students in elementary and middle school grades showed higher rates proficiency rates (sic) than traditional public schools. Charter schools had lower proficiency rates among low-income students compared to traditional public schools. However, growth scores were mixed throughout the grades" (page 4).

Many of the activities described are meetings and trainings focused on interacting with local district and charter school leaders. While the goal is to build capacity in the leadership, there are the unintended consequences of meetings taking school leaders away from their schools, charter school board members being burnt out on bureaucracy before the doors of the school open and a presumption that having school leaders attend a meeting or lunch will improve the academic

achievement of students.

The respondent does not offer compelling justification to "turnaround" a charter school that has chronically underperformed rather than revoking the charter. Mandating traditional turnaround activities for charter schools undercuts the concept of autonomy.

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:

STRENGTHS

The Colorado Charter Schools Act provides for "automatic waivers, multiple authorizers and equalized funding" (page 38). There is flexibility and autonomy with regards to hiring and firing, preparing budgets, employing non-certified personnel and need not be part of a union agreement. While authorizing districts are required to provide services to charter schools at cost, charter schools are not required to purchase services and. "A charter school may offer any educational program that a school district may offer" (page 38).

The Charter School Institute has been established as a non-traditional district authorizer. This has afforded opportunities for charter groups located in unfriendly local districts a supportive authorizer.

Colorado code of law establishes equal funding for charter schools.

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESSES

There is a tremendous number and duration of required trainings for charter school groups.

The Charter School Support Initiative evaluations of charter schools could push charter schools to conform to traditional school models of structure, academic delivery and leadership that aren't aligned with their charter. While there are elements of the Standard and Indicators for School Improvement that are universally applicable to learning environments, the structure of the tool and specificity of what evidences having a "plan of improvement" presupposes structures and leadership (page 21). Instead, there should be a measure of the charter schools against their own charter first.

Reader's Score: 26

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

The CDE has the ambitious goal of 80-90 new high quality charter schools being authorized in the grant period (page 40). There are many resources available to help groups interested in establishing charter schools.

The CDE has a Federal Program's Unit that ensures that charter schools are receiving their fair share of federal dollars from their authorizers. The Federal Program Unit also trains local districts regarding this.

The state has clear parameters listed for "significant expansion" of charter schools in order to assure that charter schools receive appropriate state and federal resources.

Included in the RFP for the sub-grants are lists of federal programs and their qualifications.

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESSES

No clear definition of "high-quality" is offered and with the mixed achievement levels of charter schools it isn't clear what the benchmark would be.

The grant writing process seems bureaucratically driven rather with high input measures for projects.

There isn't a clear mechanism cited for informing charter schools of new federal opportunities.

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:

STRENGTHS

The CDE has a clear management plan for the grant program aligned with its two objectives.

Staff has the capabilities and the experiences to fulfill the management plan described.

The peer review process for sub-grants is fully described and rigorous.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses:

Most of the outcomes and measures listed in the management grid are centered on counting, participating and self-reporting (pages 42-51). The descriptions of the processes, handbooks and trainings are exhaustive, but not clearly linked to improved student gains. The goals of these soft measures are seemingly low: "Participants will report at least a moderate amount of penetration of new knowledge into practice on post-visit surveys" (page 44) "

There is a noticeable circular, bureaucratically driven evaluation that lacks outside of the bubble input: "80% of participating charter administrators will be rated at least 'proficient' in their leadership performance by their board presidents, as indicated by annual surveys" (page 47) "80% of charter boards will be rated at least 'proficient' in their leadership performance by their administrators, as indicated by annual post-training surveys" (page 49). Parental and community satisfaction is not included.

It isn't clear why Colorado's Growth Model data will not be used until the third year of a charter school's existence.

Reader's Score: 20

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 CDE has many outreach activities to local authorizers and their staff listed. There is a division of the CDE that is ensuring that local authorizers pass through funds and provided statutorily required support to charter schools.

The development of a common application for authorizers across the state provides clear guidance to charter school applicants and authorizers as to the appropriate relationship between a charter school and its authorizer.

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESSES

For a geographically large state there is a lack of virtual meetings for participation. When authorization isn't the primary function of an entity, asking staff to make a trip across the state for a training meeting is burdensome.

The response would have been strengthened if there had been a description of how the state plans to provide relief for charter school applicants or charter holders which have unresponsive or antagonistic authorizers.

Reader's Score: 23

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 CDE has secured an agreement with a qualified outside evaluator. The evaluator will have access to all CDE gathered achievement data and will provide formative evaluation throughout the grant period and a summative report at the conclusion of the grant period. There is an emphasis of research into charter leadership and a stated intention of linking results of the research to improved leadership training.

Charter schools will experience thorough external evaluations through consultants, mentors and CSSI team visits. Having an external evaluation gather and compile the information will give a more complete picture of individual charter schools and trends in charter schools in Colorado.

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESSES

While there are many surveys for school administrators listed, there is a lack of emphasis on parental satisfaction. Only two of the proposed areas of evaluation are centered on student academic proficiency and growth.

There are eleven different evaluations listed with some having very broad scopes (page 56-58).

Perhaps some of the evaluation should have been put under dissemination rather than evaluation, especially the replication piece.

Reader's Score: 23

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 06/05/2010 04:49 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/16/2010 11:16 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Colorado Department of Education (U282A100015)

Reader #4: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
(i) CSP contribution to student achievement		
1. Student achievement	30	30
(ii) Flexibility afforded by state law		
1. Flexibility	30	25
(iii) Number of high-quality charters created		
1. Number of schools	30	20
(iv) Quality of the management plan		
1. Management plan	30	30
(v) Authorizer accountability		
1. Authorizer accountability	30	25
(vii) Quality of the evaluation		
1. Evaluation	30	30
Sub Total	180	160
Total	180	160

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - 2010 84.282A - 2: 84.282A

Reader #4: *****

Applicant: Colorado Department of Education (U282A100015)

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

Strong compliance with prior CSP grant as indicated by WestEd monitoring evaluation (p11.) Colorado Department of Education partners with Colorado League of Charter Schools and the Charter School Institute and reform minded LEA's to provide technical assistance, standardized application processes, etc. Two specific sub-grant objectives identified with specific, measurable targets for start-up and implementation grants.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None

Reader's Score: 30

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

Colorado "affords a high degree of flexibility and autonomy" to its charters and its charter law ranked 7th out of 39 by

Center for Education Reform. Automatic waivers provided for 13 state statutes. LEA's and the Charter School Institute may authorize charter schools. Charter denial appeals may be made to State Board.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

CSI authorizing is limited to LEA's that have not retained exclusive authorizing authority.

Reader's Score: 25

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

16-18 quality charters to be opened each year of the grant period (5 years.) CDE in conjunction with the Colorado League of Charter Schools provides training, mentoring programs, on-line resources and handbooks to support potential applicants.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Past 5 years activity shows that an average of 9 charters have been opened per year or just over half of projected rate. Budget summary shows an allocation of 5.09 fte's of current staff allocated to program. Probably insufficient to meet targeted growth .

Reader's Score: 20

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

Objectives are broken down into specific activities and have specific annual targets (outcomes), milestones, responsibility and data used to measure performance (p41-50.)

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None

Reader's Score: 30

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

Evaluation of 3 largest authorizers in state being conducted by The National Association of Charter School Authorizers. Evaluation to be used to improve authorizing practices. Support is provided through, authorizer training luncheons, reviewer training, development of a model standard application, checklist and review rubric, standard charter contract language and is developing a state-wide training program for authorizers. CDE is researching achievement levels resulting from various educational approaches and is completing a Special Education finance Study to be released this summer. CDE will establish protocols to identify and turnaround the lowest performing charter schools.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

While plan discusses support to be made available to authorizers it is not clear what step will be taken to hold authorizers accountable for their performance.

Reader's Score: 25

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

A comprehensive evaluation plan is presented with 11 specific components. Plan is already in place and has received a recommendation from WestEd (the author of the monitoring report for CSP) saying that Colorado's "use of research to guide development of its application objectives as well as to support the strategy for assessing the achievement of its application objectives could be considered a best practice and shared with other grantees."

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None

Reader's Score: 30

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 06/16/2010 11:16 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/13/2010 05:22 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Colorado Department of Education (U282A100015)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
(i) CSP contribution to student achievement		
1. Student achievement	30	27
(ii) Flexibility afforded by state law		
1. Flexibility	30	25
(iii) Number of high-quality charters created		
1. Number of schools	30	27
(iv) Quality of the management plan		
1. Management plan	30	27
(v) Authorizer accountability		
1. Authorizer accountability	30	20
(vii) Quality of the evaluation		
1. Evaluation	30	26
Sub Total	180	152
Total	180	152

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - 2010 84.282A - 2: 84.282A

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Colorado Department of Education (U282A100015)

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 applicant has provided clear and adequate objectives that delineates the ways in which the charter school grant program will assist educationally disadvantaged and other students in achieving State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards (P 14-38). Activities detailed clearly support each project objective. The applicant clearly provides adequate technical assistance to all potential sub grant applicants to ensure high quality proposals (p 16). Evidence of board member training and leadership training by the Colorado clearly support the initiative to develop high quality charter schools (p 19).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide sufficient explanation of the steps to be taken to inform teachers, parents, and communities of the SEA's charter school grant program.

Reader's Score: 27

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 applicant has clearly described the ways in which charter schools in Colorado are afforded a high degree of autonomy. Specifically, charter schools have control in such areas as operations, budget preparation, contracting for services, facilities and personnel matters (p 38).

Weaknesses:

The application briefly describes the two types of authorizers but, the applicant did not provide a description of how the State's law establishes an administrative relationship between the charter school and the authorized public chartering agencies.

Reader's Score: 25

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 provides a reasonable estimate of 16-18 new charters to be authorized annually (p 40). The applicant has described clear internal procedures, through the use of a formula funding spreadsheet and contacting other internal staff, for ensuring equitable disbursement of federal funds to charter schools(p 40). The applicant also notifies charter schools of other federal funding opportunities via email as they become available (p 40). The state has a clear definition of significant expansion which further ensures Federal funds are allocated equitably.

Weaknesses:

The applicant has not provided a clear definition of "high quality".

Reader's Score: 27

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 management plan for the proposed project is clear, specific, detailed and reasonable in terms of meeting the objectives of the project. The applicant has provided a clear time line, milestones, outcomes, measures, as well as staff responsible for each (P 42-51). The applicant has provided descriptions of the steps to be taken to award subgrant funds to eligible applicants (p14 -18). The peer review process consists of drawing from a pool of 25 individuals with specific charter school experience, training, and reviewer discussion (P17).

Weaknesses:

More detail to the assessment of the quality of applications would have strengthened the response. Many outcome measures and process measures were provided but none of them related to graduation rates or career readiness.

Reader's Score: 27

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 applicant clearly states the technical assistance that will be offered to charter authorizers (14-38). The applicant has created a website to assist authorizers in creating high quality, complete charter applications (p 20). The applicant plans on developing an Authorizer's Handbook as an activity to accomplish objective 2 of the project (p 24).

Weaknesses:

Accountability is more geared towards charter schools as opposed to charter authorizers. The response could be strengthened by providing more detail to ways in which authorizers will be held accountable.

Reader's Score: 20

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 indicates that the evaluation of the CSP grant will include collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data along with specific methods for collecting such data. The applicants references the high praise received from West Ed during a monitoring visit regarding the way in which research has been used to guide the development of its CSP application (p 57).

Weaknesses:

The response would be strengthened by providing a more detailed description of when reports and results of outcomes will be available and how the applicant will use the information from the evaluation to monitor the 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.

Reader's Score: 26

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/13/2010 05:22 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/09/2010 09:05 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Colorado Department of Education (U282A100015)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
(i) CSP contribution to student achievement		
1. Student achievement	30	22
(ii) Flexibility afforded by state law		
1. Flexibility	30	24
(iii) Number of high-quality charters created		
1. Number of schools	30	20
(iv) Quality of the management plan		
1. Management plan	30	26
(v) Authorizer accountability		
1. Authorizer accountability	30	25
(vii) Quality of the evaluation		
1. Evaluation	30	27
Sub Total	180	144
Total	180	144

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - 2010 84.282A - 2: 84.282A

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Colorado Department of Education (U282A100015)

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 proposes a clear plan for disseminating the objectives for the charter school grant program. Specifically, the applicant will use a weekly email distribution list that "has approximately 650 email addresses for communicating with school administrators, board members, parents, charter school developers" to inform them about the CSP grant program. In addition, the information will be "featured prominently on CDE's website, in charter school trainings, on the "Start a Colorado Charter" web site, and through one-on-one technical assistance." (p. 7, paragraph 2)

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESSES

There is inadequate detail in describing how failing charter schools will be turned around.

When compared to district schools, charter schools in Colorado as a whole are not succeeding in assisting educationally advantaged students to achieve state academic content standards and state student achievement standards: "Charter schools had low proficiency rates among low-income students compared to traditional public schools." (p 4, paragraph 2)

According to the West Ed report cited in the application, there are only indirect venues for disseminating best practices to charter schools: "The state does not have a system in place to disseminate best practices to LEA's." (p 20 of WestEd report, paragraph 6)

Reader's Score: 22

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 state ensures there is more than one path to create a charter school by having an authorizer in addition to the LEA's, the Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI). (p 4, paragraph 4)

The state allows charter to have automatic waivers and equalized funding. (p 38, paragraph 3)

The state allows charters to have flexibility in employment practices: "Teachers must meet the Highly Qualified definition but do not need to be certified or part of a union agreement and are employed At Will by the school." (p 3, paragraph 5)

Charter Schools also have adequate choice in purchasing services : "Charter Schools may, at their discretion, contract with their authorizing districts for the purchase of district services. Authorizing districts are required to provide such services to the charter school at cost." (p 38, paragraph 6)

Charter schools share the same exemptions as district schools in regards to local zoning laws and they have the freedom to set a longer school year.(p 39, paragraph 2).

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESSES

The Charter Law in Colorado does not allow for charters to become their own LEA. Charter Schools are dependent on receiving federal funds through the local LEA. (p 10, paragraph 2 and p 18, paragraph 2)

According to the West Ed report cited in the application, the LEA are attempting to slow the expansion of charter schools by providing additional district schools: "[The officials from the Schools of Choice Unit] noted that in response to recent State legislation promoting innovative schools, both Denver and Boulder area school districts had created new choice options within thir districts that resemble charter schools. However, State officials cautioned that the impetus behind this action might be to stem the tide of charter school applications rather than to replicate the best or promising aspects of charter schools."(p 20 of WestEd report, paragraph 5)

The application does not provide detail of the relationship between the state and CSI.

Reader's Score: 24

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

The number of start-up grants (16-18) and the number of implementation grants (22-35) is reasonable, given that there are currently 150 charter schools in Colorado (p e0, paragraphs 1 and 5)

The State, through the publication of the Colorado Charter School handbook and by holding semi-monthly business leader meetings, provides information on Federal funding opportunities, thus opening additional funding opportunities up to charter schools (p e51, paragraph 8).

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESSES

The Colorado Charter School handbook does not provide information on Federal funding formulas. (p e51, paragraph 8). Charter Schools may not have access to information to verify the accuracy of the formulas funds provided to them by the LEA.

It is not clear that the state is doing enough to ensure charter schools receive their fair share of federal funds, including those for special education, according to the West Ed report (p e53, paragraph 6). Five charter schools in Aurora are addressing the lack of transparency in distribution of IDEA part B funds by the Aurora LEA. (p e53, paragraph 4).

The application lacks a definition of a high quality charter school (p 40).

Reader's Score: 20

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 has clear and precise metrics with a specific timeline. For example, "40% of sub-grantee administrator will complete the entire two-year leadership mentoring program by the end of the grant period. (p 47)

The application provides strong detail about the background, diversity and capacity of the management team (pp 52-56).

The state's peer review process, according to WestEd, is "rigorous and transparent." (p e59, paragraph 4) Reviewers are trained, read applications independently and discuss using rubrics.

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESSES

There is no clear definition or rubric defining a high quality charter school (p 17).

The management plan largely describes process outcomes such as attending meeting rather than making a clear connection between the work supported by the grant and raising student academic achievement (p 47).

Reader's Score: 26

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 state requires a common application for charter schools, thus ensuring each LEA will provide uniform application. (WestEd report,p e13)

The state provides strong training to authorizing by holding authorizer luncheon trainings (p 25), reviewer training (p 26), releasing a report on charter school achievement levels as they relate to school typology (p 26).

The State is considering adopting Colorado authorizer quality standards (p e24).

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESSES

There is no detail on how authorizers are monitored.

Reader's Score: 25

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 evaluator, Dr Carpenter, is qualified to conduct the application. (p e20)

The data sources and methods are described specifically and include items such as annual surveys, student performance data, number of schools created and original research on replication and turnarounds. (p 56-60)

There is a specific date for when this data on outcomes will become available (p 60, paragraph 5).

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESSES

There is no outcome measure for college readiness and this is one of the application's objectives.

Reader's Score: 27

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 06/09/2010 09:05 PM