

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

Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Minnesota Department of Education (U282A110017)

Reader #5: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Assisting students in meeting standards		
1. Meeting standards	20	20
Flexibility Afforded by State Law		
1. Flexibility	20	18
Number of high-quality charters to be created		
1. Charters to be created	20	15
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management plan	10	10
Authorizer Accountability		
1. Authorizer Accountability	20	20
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project evaluation	10	10
Sub Total	100	93
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Periodic Review and Evaluation		
1. Periodic Review and Eval	10	10
Number of High-Quality Charter Schools		
1. High-quality charters	8	8
Authorizer Other Than LEA or Appeals Process		
1. Alt. Authorizer, Appeals	5	5
High Degree of Autonomy		
1. High Degree of Autonomy	5	5
Improving Achievement and HS Graduation Rates		
1. Achievement & grad rates	12	9
Promoting Diversity		
1. Promoting Diversity	5	4
Improving Productivity		
1. Improving Productivity	5	4
Sub Total	50	45

Total

150

138

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - FY11 CSP SEA panel - 2 - 1: 84.282A

Reader #5: *****

Applicant: Minnesota Department of Education (U282A110017)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Assisting students in meeting standards

1. (1) The contribution the charter schools grant program will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged and other students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards (20 points).

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to provide a description of the objectives for the SEA's charter school grant program and to explain how these objectives will be met, including steps that will be 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 describes the project's objectives for these criteria as "fundamental" and provides concrete evidence the State is not attempting to complicate their objectives in meeting this particular goal. MDE lists four objectives in ensuring the charter schools grant will assist educationally disadvantaged and other students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards and then provides strong follow-up to each objective. (pages 21, 22, and 23)

1. Increase the number of high-quality charter schools in the state that assist educationally disadvantaged and other students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.
2. Establish and implement a comprehensive and rigorous accountability framework to increase academic performance and decrease the achievement gap at Minnesota charter schools.
3. Improve effectiveness and capacity of charter school authorizers.
4. Disseminate charter schools' best or promising practices to each LEA in the state.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Flexibility Afforded by State Law

1. The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA to charter schools under the State's charter school law (20 points).

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe how the State's charter school law establishes an administrative relationship between charter schools 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 describe the degree of autonomy charter schools in the State exercise over such matters as the charter school's budgets, expenditures, daily operation, schedules, curricula, and personnel in accordance with the State's charter school law.

Strengths:

MN has been repeatedly recognized for the State's noninterventionist mindset with regards to the flexibility afforded the charter schools within the state. The State lists seven main areas within MN law which provides broad flexibility under the law. These seven areas are model laws to be celebrated. (bottom of page 30)

Weaknesses:

"Charter schools must employ licensed teachers". (top of page 31)

Reader's Score: 18

Selection Criteria - Number of high-quality charters to be created**1. The number of high-quality charter schools to be created in the State (20 points).**

Note: The Secretary considers the SEA's reasonable estimate of the number of new high-quality charter schools that will be authorized and opened in the State during the project period. The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe, in detail, its charter school subgrant application and peer review processes, how the peer review process will assess quality, and how the SEA will ensure that only high-quality charter school applicants (as defined by the applicant) are selected for funding. States that have received grants under this program previously are invited to provide data on the percentages of eligible applicants that were awarded sub-grants and how this percentage related to the overall quality of applicants funded.

Strengths:

MN has maintained a persistent, deliberate goal to incubate more high quality charter schools within the state. Aggressive goals for expansion, strong federal CSP subgrant funding criteria with more emphasis on authorizer accountability, to well designed peer reviews, MN has positioned itself to continue to be at the forefront of the national charter public school sector.

Weaknesses:

The numbers do not match up within the grant. Semi-annual funding cycles are confusing. State needs to provide more data to backup claims.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan**1. Quality of the management plan (10 points). In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers (a) 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; and (b) 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 (20 U.S.C. 7221b (b) (2) (A) and (B) and 7221e(a)).**

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe any compliance issues or findings related to the CSP that have been identified in an audit or other monitoring review, as well as the steps taken to

address such compliance issues or findings.

Strengths:

MDE Charter Schools Division has a number of experts within the charter public schools sector who bring various levels of charter knowledge to the office. MDE is highly fortunate to have leadership with the years of experience at school, university, state and federal levels.

The leadership within the state appears to have the capacity to carry out a very well organized and thorough management plan for the proposed project.

Weaknesses:

No apparent weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - 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 (20 points).**

Strengths:

MN's authorizer oversight strategic plan provides an exemplary synopsis of the state's commitment to monitor and hold accountable authorizers in the state. "If MDE establishes ambitious goals for student achievement based on both growth and attainment on multiple measures, selects authorizers who have the capacity and commitment to meeting the authorizing standards, and outperform legitimate comparison groups, exceed state averages, eliminate the achievement gap, and graduate from high schools prepared for college and career readiness." (top of page 56)

The above statement places a responsibility upon authorizers in MN; to be an authorizer, you must show capacity and commitment to quality chartering, not chartering because it politically correct.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

- 1. Quality of the project evaluation (10 points). 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 the 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 fully describes the scope and rationale for the State's evaluation of MN's proposed objectives. MDE provides thorough evidence for determining appropriate qualifications for an evaluator, an evaluation plan, and evaluation design which enhances the overall scope of the MDE charter project.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Periodic Review and Evaluation

1. **Periodic Review and Evaluation (up to 10 points).** The State provides for periodic review and evaluation by the authorized public chartering agency of each charter school at least once every five years, unless required more frequently by State law, to determine whether the charter school is meeting the terms of the school's charter, and is meeting or exceeding the student academic achievement requirements and goals for charter schools as set forth under State law or the school's charter.

Note: The Secretary invites the applicant to provide information regarding whether the periodic review that takes place at least once every five years includes a public vote on whether to terminate, extend, or renew a school's charter and on whether a failure to affirmatively renew or extend a school's charter during the periodic review that takes place at least once every five years would result in the charter school being closed.

Strengths:

Exceptional review and evaluation methods are in place for both charter schools and charter authorizers. "The authorizer shall provide a formal written evaluation of the school's performance before the authorizer renews the charter contract. The department must review and comment on the authorizer's evaluation process at the time the authorizer submits its application for approval and each time the authorizer undergoes its five-year review." (MN Statutes, sections 124D.10) (page 2)

"Eligible organizations must submit an application to the commissioner for approval as an authorizer before submitting

any affidavit to the commissioner to the charter school' " (MN Statutes, sections 124D.10, subdivision 3) (page 3)

Holding authorizers to high standards no differently than the individual charter school is held to its own high standards is the essence of accountability.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 10

Competitive Preference Priority - Number of High-Quality Charter Schools

- 1. Number of High-Quality Charter Schools (up to 8 points).** The State has demonstrated progress in increasing the number of high-quality charter schools that are held accountable in the terms of the school's charter for meeting clear and measurable objectives for the educational progress of the students attending the schools, in the period prior to the period for which an SEA applies for a grant under this competition.

Note: The Secretary invites the applicant to provide the following information: (1) its definition of a "high-quality charter school"; (2) the number of "high-quality charter schools" in the State and a description of how the rate has changed over the past five years; and (3) the percentage of "high-quality charter schools" in the State and a description of how the percentage has changed over the past five years.

Strengths:

Excellent "interim" definition for "high-quality" charter schools. The MDE has done an exemplary job of recognizing the shortcomings of this method, but has determined accurately that the shortcomings of an interim definition/methodology to determine what is, or what is not a high quality charter school jeopardizes the states charter sector far more so. (page 6 and 7)

Furthermore, MDE has been aggressive and determined to cultivate the charter sector within the state.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 8

Competitive Preference Priority - Authorizer Other Than LEA or Appeals Process

- 1. One Authorized Public Chartering Agency Other than a Local Educational Agency (LEA), or an Appeals Process (5 points).** The State:

(a) Provides for one authorized public chartering agency that is not an LEA, such as a State chartering board, for each individual or entity seeking to operate a charter school pursuant to State law; or

(b) In the case of a State in which LEA's are the only authorized public chartering agencies, allows for an appeals process for the denial of an application for a charter school.

PLEASE NOTE: Reviewers must assign a score of 0 or 5, but nothing in between.

Strengths:

Multiple authorizer opportunities are found within the State, including local boards of education.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority - High Degree of Autonomy

- 1. High Degree of Autonomy (up to 5 points). The State ensures that each charter school has a high degree of autonomy over the charter school's budget and expenditures.**

Strengths:

All charter schools within the state are considered LEAs and are fiscally independent and operate autonomously of school districts, receiving direct payments funding from the State. (top of page 9)

Weaknesses:

No noticeable weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Achievement and HS Graduation Rates

- 1. Improving Achievement and High School Graduation Rates (up to 12 points). Projects that are designed to address one or more of the following priority areas:**

(a) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) and college enrollment rates for students in rural local educational agencies (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) (up to 3 points).

(b) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) and college enrollment rates for students with disabilities (up to 3 points).

(c) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) and college enrollment rates for English learners (up to 3 points).

(d) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates and college enrollment rates in high-poverty schools (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) (up to 3 points).

Note: For each population of students for which the applicant is seeking competitive priority points, the Secretary invites the applicant to discuss the steps it would take to meet the priority. For example, the applicant could describe any guidance or support it would provide to charter school developers to assist such developers in recruiting and providing high-quality services to students who are members of the particular student population(s); how it would monitor charter schools in the State to ensure that they are taking effective and active steps to recruit and enroll students who are members of the particular

student population(s); how it would monitor charter schools in the State to ensure that students who are members of the particular student population(s) are being served by such schools; or how it would design its subgrant competition, which may include the use of preferences, to ensure that students who are members of the particular student population(s) are being served at rates equal to or greater than such students are being served in other schools in the area.

General:

MN's various statewide plans to improve high school graduation rates and to better prepare students for post secondary institutions or the workforce is unquestionably a model by which other states can learn from. Increasing the understanding and ability of MN's charter high schools to better utilize these various resources provides the charter high schools in the state with additional opportunities for success. (page 10 and 11)

MDE's realistic approach to better serve students with disabilities, students in rural locations, and English language learners through preference points for applicants attempting to serve one or more of these subgroups is capable of producing significant results for those students. (bottom of page 11)

MN's application fails to address graduation rates and college enrollment rates in high-poverty schools, though the application does say the State will assist educationally disadvantaged and "other students".

Reader's Score: 9

Competitive Preference Priority - Promoting Diversity

- 1. Promoting Diversity (up to 5 points). Projects that are designed to promote student diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, or avoid racial isolation.**

Note: The Secretary invites the applicant to discuss how it would design its subgrant competition to meet this priority.

Strengths:

MN's charter schools serve a "greater percentage of students who (a) qualify for free or reduced-priced meals, (b) a greater percentage of English language learners, and a much higher percentage of minority students". (bottom of page 12)

While MDE could rest in their laurels in serving a diverse student population, "MDE will provide preference points to promote student diversity". (bottom of page 13)

Weaknesses:

There appears to be a high likelihood of racial isolation within the charter sector of the State. Looking at the chart on page 13, the high percentage of minority children attending charter schools will simply cause a stronger chance of racial isolation.

Reader's Score: 4

Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Productivity

- 1. Improving Productivity (up to 5 points). Projects that are designed to significantly increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources while improving student learning or other educational outcomes (i.e., outcomes per unit of resource). Such projects may include innovative and sustainable**

uses of technology, modification of school schedules and teacher compensation systems, use of open educational resources (as defined in the Federal Register Notice), or other strategies.

Strengths:

MN's efforts to increase the significance of improving productivity within the state's current and future charter schools can have a strong and lasting impact upon the use of time, staff, money or other resources. The six listed areas of focus which receive additional preference points for charter school CSP applicants are well defined and appropriate. (page 14)

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not fully expound on the six areas of focus which receive additional preference points for charter school CSP applicants are well defined and appropriate. (page 14)

Reader's Score: 4

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Minnesota Department of Education (U282A110017)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Assisting students in meeting standards		
1. Meeting standards	20	13
Flexibility Afforded by State Law		
1. Flexibility	20	15
Number of high-quality charters to be created		
1. Charters to be created	20	15
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management plan	10	10
Authorizer Accountability		
1. Authorizer Accountability	20	18
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project evaluation	10	8
Sub Total	100	79
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Periodic Review and Evaluation		
1. Periodic Review and Eval	10	8
Number of High-Quality Charter Schools		
1. High-quality charters	8	5
Authorizer Other Than LEA or Appeals Process		
1. Alt. Authorizer, Appeals	5	5
High Degree of Autonomy		
1. High Degree of Autonomy	5	5
Improving Achievement and HS Graduation Rates		
1. Achievement & grad rates	12	9
Promoting Diversity		
1. Promoting Diversity	5	5
Improving Productivity		
1. Improving Productivity	5	5
Sub Total	50	42

Total

150

121

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - FY11 CSP SEA panel - 2 - 1: 84.282A

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Minnesota Department of Education (U282A110017)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Assisting students in meeting standards

1. (1) The contribution the charter schools grant program will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged and other students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards (20 points).

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to provide a description of the objectives for the SEA's charter school grant program and to explain how these objectives will be met, including steps that will be 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:

Minnesota charters schools have done a good job of enrolling their targeted groups. What has been lacking is the performance of those charter schools where minority and low income students attend. However, the first objective of the Minnesota grant is to address this specific concern by not only bolstering their authorizing practice, but also by offering sub grants to successful charter operators to expand their existing school sites by expanding their grade levels. The plan provided provides an exhaustive plan that details various objectives that aims to bolster charter schools.

Weaknesses:

The debate of what is a high quality charter or not as evidenced by the removal of the "interim" label of the definition needs to be addressed to avoid ambiguity and arguments. Timing of framework is not concise.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Flexibility Afforded by State Law

1. The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA to charter schools under the State's charter school law (20 points).

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe how the State's charter school law establishes an administrative relationship between charter schools 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 describe the degree of autonomy charter schools in the State exercise over such matters as the charter school's budgets, expenditures, daily operation, schedules, curricula, and personnel in accordance with the State's charter school law.

Strengths:

MDE offers evidence of a more than adequate flexibility to charters schools and authorizer in the state. Operations, finance, governance, and facilities are essential autonomy's offered to charter schools in exchange for a limited first term period (3 years) and review. MDE has demonstrated a conscious effort, even while reviewing the role of authorizers, to not overstep the autonomies given to charter schools.

Weaknesses:

It appears that charter authorizing offered through such a multitude of agencies, allowed for ambiguous expectations of school developers and as such, MDE has had to revise their role as it applies to overseeing authorizers.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Number of high-quality charters to be created**1. The number of high-quality charter schools to be created in the State (20 points).**

Note: The Secretary considers the SEA's reasonable estimate of the number of new high-quality charter schools that will be authorized and opened in the State during the project period. The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe, in detail, its charter school subgrant application and peer review processes, how the peer review process will assess quality, and how the SEA will ensure that only high-quality charter school applicants (as defined by the applicant) are selected for funding. States that have received grants under this program previously are invited to provide data on the percentages of eligible applicants that were awarded sub-grants and how this percentage related to the overall quality of applicants funded.

Strengths:

Minnesota has a diverse range of authorizers that include non profits, and private universities. The multiple authorizers has provided the opportunity for multiple charter authorizers to quickly expand the number of charters in the state. Though the state continues to support the expansion of charter schools through these multiple agencies, it has tightened up the process for organization wishing to authorize charter schools by requiring approval of the commissioner for some entities. Minnesota estimates opening approximately 95 charters schools in the state through the next 5 years (if waiver is granted). The states plan to offer expansions (approximately 80 as detailed in the table on page 80) is a sound manner in which to offer more assurance of quality charter schools.

Weaknesses:

Charter schools, overall, are performing lower when compared to non charter schools, and although this gap has been narrowing ; it is still a significant factor especially considering that Minnesota charter schools serve a much more diverse and at risk population than that of non charters. What is the plan if the waiver is not granted, in terms of the number of new charters schools to be opened? Data for what has worked in the previous CSP grant funding cycle would have been beneficial.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan**1. Quality of the management plan (10 points). In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers (a) 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; and (b) 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 educations 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 (20 U.S.C. 7221b (b) (2) (A) and (B) and 7221e(a)).**

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe any compliance issues or findings related to the CSP that have been identified in an audit or other monitoring review, as well as the steps taken to address such compliance issues or findings.

Strengths:

The staff hired for project are experienced and capable to oversee the CSP project for the state. The management plan matrix detailed on p. e38 is clear and well thought out with realistic time lines. Most milestones are clear and measurable and are dedicated to staff members to assure accountability as objectives are met.

Weaknesses:

None to be noted

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - 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 (20 points).**

Strengths:

MED recognized the need to establish a plan to oversee charter authorizers in their duty to assure high quality charter schools, thus the State in 2010, secured outside funding to bolster their monitoring practice of authorizers. Should the state receive CSP funds and receive the 5 year waiver, the opportunity to change charter practices will work in parallel fashion with the newly established charter schools. Technical Assistance and the dissemination of effective practices is essential in supporting authorizers and, MN will implement the established framework to authorizers and charter schools. It appears that the oversight of charter authorizers was once vaguely addressed in the state, and as such, the practice now requires correction and has placed the MDE as the oversight entity over authorizers.

Weaknesses:

none to be noted

Reader's Score: 18

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

- 1. Quality of the project evaluation (10 points). 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 the 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 recruitment and retention process of the evaluator or contractor is of sound practice and seems to answer to the administrative or state board policy. More specifically, the summated data collected will review the overall effectiveness of the state as they managed the CSP program and objectives.

Weaknesses:

How will the summated findings be disseminated among the different stakeholders? The Summative findings section could have been detailed in a more organized manner , for example, by using a table or graph to align some of the activities with the objective.

Reader's Score: 8

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Periodic Review and Evaluation

1. **Periodic Review and Evaluation (up to 10 points).** The State provides for periodic review and evaluation by the authorized public chartering agency of each charter school at least once every five years, unless required more frequently by State law, to determine whether the charter school is meeting the terms of the school's charter, and is meeting or exceeding the student academic achievement requirements and goals for charter schools as set forth under State law or the schools charter.

Note: The Secretary invites the applicant to provide information regarding whether the periodic review that takes place at least once every five years includes a public vote on whether to terminate, extend, or renew a school's charter and on whether a failure to affirmatively renew or extend a schools charter during the periodic review that takes place at least once every five years would result in the charter school being closed.

Strengths:

Minnesota demonstrates the requirement for this section by offering a three year initial term, and then a subsequent five year term upon renewal upon a review. The schools operations, academic, and financial performance are evaluated before a renewal is granted. The authorizer is also evaluated by the Commissioner of Education every five years with the intent of refining authorizing practice and to assure sound oversight of charter operations.

Weaknesses:

However, the initial three year term may be limited by not offering a school sufficient time for charter schools to see through the unfolding of their plan and school.

Reader's Score: 8

Competitive Preference Priority - Number of High-Quality Charter Schools

1. **Number of High-Quality Charter Schools (up to 8 points).** The State has demonstrated progress in increasing the number of high-quality charter schools that are held accountable in the terms of the school's charter for meeting clear and measurable objectives for the educational progress of the

students attending the schools, in the period prior to the period for which an SEA applies for a grant under this competition.

Note: The Secretary invites the applicant to provide the following information: (1) its definition of a "high-quality charter school"; (2) the number of "high-quality charter schools" in the State and a description of how the rate has changed over the past five years; and (3) the percentage of "high-quality charter schools" in the State and a description of how the percentage has changed over the past five years.

Strengths:

Minnesota has demonstrated a strong commitment to having a thriving charter school system as exhibited by the establishment of nearly 100 new and developing schools in the current CSP grant period. Minnesota has recognized the disparity between the achievement levels between charter schools and non-charters and has determined that the calculations implemented in the school comparisons merit more review, specifically as the data is calculated to determine High Quality Charter School measures. The AYP success rate gap between charter and non charters have narrowed.

Weaknesses:

Charter schools are performing lower than non charters.

The definition of the High Quality charter school is defined as interim due to the reason detailed above in regards to the methodology used to qualify High Quality. However, it was not clear in this section as to why the participation rate at charter schools was significantly low , as stated on p. e59. It was pointed out that only a third of charters met the 80% testing criteria. Considering that the AYP federal requirement is above 80% for the participation rate, a more detailed explanation should be noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority - Authorizer Other Than LEA or Appeals Process

1. One Authorized Public Chartering Agency Other than a Local Educational Agency (LEA), or an Appeals Process (5 points). The State:

(a) Provides for one authorized public chartering agency that is not an LEA, such as a State chartering board, for each individual or entity seeking to operate a charter school pursuant to State law; or

(b) In the case of a State in which LEA's are the only authorized public chartering agencies, allows for an appeals process for the denial of an application for a charter school.

PLEASE NOTE: Reviewers must assign a score of 0 or 5, but nothing in between.

Strengths:

Minnesota has a wide diverse type of providers that include non profits, and private universities, that has provided the opportunity for multiple charter authorizers . Though the state continues to support the expansion of charter schools through the multiple agencies, it has tightened up the process for organization wishing to authorize charter schools by requiring the approval of the commissioner for some entities.

Weaknesses:

None to be noted

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority - High Degree of Autonomy

- 1. High Degree of Autonomy (up to 5 points). The State ensures that each charter school has a high degree of autonomy over the charter school's budget and expenditures.**

Strengths:

Charters are considered LEAs and operate independently than that of the charter authorizers in terms of operations and financial structures as highlighted on page e29, second paragraph 2 detailing the seven point items in Minnesota that allow charters for flexibilities. The state stipulates that charter schools have an option for collective bargaining, however, the units of the collective bargaining must be autonomous than that of existing unions thereby assuring that a school's vision be more assured to be maintained.

Weaknesses:

None to be noted

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Achievement and HS Graduation Rates

- 1. Improving Achievement and High School Graduation Rates (up to 12 points). Projects that are designed to address one or more of the following priority areas:**

(a) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) and college enrollment rates for students in rural local educational agencies (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) (up to 3 points).

(b) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) and college enrollment rates for students with disabilities (up to 3 points).

(c) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) and college enrollment rates for English learners (up to 3 points).

(d) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates and college enrollment rates in high-poverty schools (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) (up to 3 points).

Note: For each population of students for which the applicant is seeking competitive priority points, the Secretary invites the applicant to discuss the steps it would take to meet the priority. For example, the applicant could describe any guidance or support it would provide to charter school developers to assist such developers in recruiting and providing high-quality services to students who are members of the particular student population(s); how it would monitor charter schools in the State to ensure that they are taking effective and active steps to recruit and enroll students who are members of the particular student population(s); how it would monitor charter schools in the State to ensure that students who are members of the particular student population(s) are being served by such schools; or how it would design its subgrant competition, which may include the use of preferences, to ensure that students who are members of the particular student population(s) are being served at rates equal to or greater than such students are being served in other schools in the area.

General:

The overview provided by MDE regarding a Framework that was developed to support the redesigns of Minnesota high schools, addressed on page e9, second paragraph, highlights a plan to address high school graduation. The intention of the plan to be accessible is apparent as the framework and different initiatives are available to high school practitioners online. The States' commitment to address the high school graduation rate is further evident as the MDE plans to offer preference points to sub grantees who create designs to address this topic in their applications. A high school model was developed and piloted for 2 years prior to this application and was referred to as an ideal model. However, there was no mention of results with this program as it relates to the improvement of high schools in the state.

Reader's Score: 9

Competitive Preference Priority - Promoting Diversity

1. **Promoting Diversity (up to 5 points).** Projects that are designed to promote student diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, or avoid racial isolation.

Note: The Secretary invites the applicant to discuss how it would design its subgrant competition to meet this priority.

Strengths:

According to the data provided in the last paragraph on page e1, existing charter schools already serve a more diverse population in the state than that of the non charter schools. The charter schools will seek to expand on the outreach and student enrollment of the detailed target population and the state allows for charter school enrollment to target certain demographics.

Weaknesses:

Page e13 states that charters should avoid racial isolation and a re-segregation of schools. What is the demographic of communities where schools are located. Perhaps conducting an analysis that would specify if particular subgroup crosses boundaries and neighborhoods to attend a school out of their areas of residence would be beneficial. Also reviewing why non minority and more affluent student populations do not choose charter schools would be informative for developers especially considering the amount of new charter schools slated to be developed in the State.

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Productivity

1. **Improving Productivity (up to 5 points).** Projects that are designed to significantly increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources while improving student learning or other educational outcomes (i.e., outcomes per unit of resource). Such projects may include innovative and sustainable uses of technology, modification of school schedules and teacher compensation systems, use of open educational resources (as defined in the Federal Register Notice), or other strategies.

Strengths:

The experience of Minnesota as charter developers, having been the first state to authorize charter legislation, is a proven asset for this specific section. The practice of leveraging resources among other charter schools in areas such as special education services, and facilities is a practice observed in veteran charter schools or authorizers responses to this area. Moreover, by allowing up to 5 preference points to sub grantees in this area justifies the states commitment to improving productivity.

Weaknesses:

It appears that the state defers this section regarding productivity back to the charter schools.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 05/27/2011 01:17 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 05/05/2011 09:52 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Minnesota Department of Education (U282A110017)

Reader #4: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Assisting students in meeting standards		
1. Meeting standards	20	10
Flexibility Afforded by State Law		
1. Flexibility	20	18
Number of high-quality charters to be created		
1. Charters to be created	20	12
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management plan	10	8
Authorizer Accountability		
1. Authorizer Accountability	20	18
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project evaluation	10	8
Sub Total	100	74
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Periodic Review and Evaluation		
1. Periodic Review and Eval	10	8
Number of High-Quality Charter Schools		
1. High-quality charters	8	5
Authorizer Other Than LEA or Appeals Process		
1. Alt. Authorizer, Appeals	5	5
High Degree of Autonomy		
1. High Degree of Autonomy	5	5
Improving Achievement and HS Graduation Rates		
1. Achievement & grad rates	12	9
Promoting Diversity		
1. Promoting Diversity	5	4
Improving Productivity		
1. Improving Productivity	5	5
Sub Total	50	41

Total

150

115

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - FY11 CSP SEA panel - 2 - 1: 84.282A

Reader #4: *****

Applicant: Minnesota Department of Education (U282A110017)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Assisting students in meeting standards

1. (1) The contribution the charter schools grant program will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged and other students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards (20 points).

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to provide a description of the objectives for the SEA's charter school grant program and to explain how these objectives will be met, including steps that will be 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 subgrant award preferences are clearly aligned with the competitive priorities. The plan for dissemination of best practices is based partly on responses to monitoring and also on a lack of success in this area in the past.

Weaknesses:

The second and third objectives (to establish and implement a comprehensive and rigorous accountability framework and to improve the effectiveness and capacity of charter school authorizers) are pertinent to the larger system and results may not be significant during the period of the grant. In fact, the third objective is already supported by a NACSA grant and state general funds. The application would be strengthened by focusing efforts on how to support these efforts specifically with start-up schools. The plan for disseminating information related to CSP subgrants is not well described.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Flexibility Afforded by State Law

1. The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA to charter schools under the State's charter school law (20 points).

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe how the State's charter school law establishes an administrative relationship between charter schools 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 describe the degree of autonomy charter schools in the State exercise over such matters as the charter school's budgets, expenditures, daily operation, schedules, curricula, and personnel in accordance with the State's charter school law.

Strengths:

Charter schools in the State are independent LEAs. The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools recently ranked Minnesota as having the best state charter law in the nation to support the growth of high quality charter schools. The Center for Education Reform ranked them as having the second strongest of the nations' 41 charter laws. These laws also

grant them fiscal and legal autonomy, the authority of the charter boards to make all decisions related to school operations, the right to receive state and federal funds directly, exemptions from many state statutes and rules (including collective bargaining), and the authority to contract for services and to discharge staff.

Weaknesses:

The relationship between the charter school and an authorizer is not described other than to state that they are responsible for monitoring and holding schools accountable for academic and financial performance. Nothing is provided related to the support authorizers are required to give.

Reader's Score: 18

Selection Criteria - Number of high-quality charters to be created

1. The number of high-quality charter schools to be created in the State (20 points).

Note: The Secretary considers the SEA's reasonable estimate of the number of new high-quality charter schools that will be authorized and opened in the State during the project period. The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe, in detail, its charter school subgrant application and peer review processes, how the peer review process will assess quality, and how the SEA will ensure that only high-quality charter school applicants (as defined by the applicant) are selected for funding. States that have received grants under this program previously are invited to provide data on the percentages of eligible applicants that were awarded sub-grants and how this percentage related to the overall quality of applicants funded.

Strengths:

Preference points will be incorporated into the subgrant selection criteria. The peer review process is strong and includes training in CSP grant basics. A post-review meeting is held to discuss discrepancies in scores and comments and to reach consensus regarding an overall rating.

Weaknesses:

A large part of the projection for numbers of new subgrants depends of the granting of a waiver from ED for existing schools to apply for a significant expansion grant. The application does not make a strong case for semi-annual funding cycles or fully explain why the CSP subgrant will be "decoupled" from the charter application, particularly as the requirements for authorizers will be much more stringent than in the past. Merely providing the percentage of successful CSP subgrant applications (46% from 2005-2009) does not speak to the quality of those funded.

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. Quality of the management plan (10 points). In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers (a) 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; and (b) 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 (20 U.S.C. 7221b (b) (2) (A) and (B) and 7221e(a)).

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe any compliance issues or findings related to the CSP that have been identified in an audit or other monitoring review, as well as the steps taken to

address such compliance issues or findings.

Strengths:

The Project Director, the Grants Specialist, and the Acting Supervisor are already in place and well experienced. The management plan on pages 39-45 includes project activities, responsibilities, timelines, and milestones.

Weaknesses:

It is not clear how the Charter Authorizer Specialist (.25) and the Accountability Specialist (1.0) will specifically support the CSP grant and what the required qualifications will be for those hired for these positions.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - 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 (20 points).**

Strengths:

The State is in the process of developing a system to effectively monitor and evaluate authorizers through a strategic planning grant from NACSA. Activities will include setting expectations and managing performance, supporting effective authorizers through technical assistance and the dissemination of best authorizer practices, communicating a state vision and expectations, publicly reporting on authorizer and charter school performance, and facilitating charter school/authorizer links to other resources.

Weaknesses:

Authorizers will be evaluated every five years, which could be a long time if they are not functioning effectively. There is no explanation related to what charter schools will do if the state decides to remove their authorizer.

Reader's Score: 18

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

- 1. Quality of the project evaluation (10 points). 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 the 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 qualifications for the evaluator are provided and appropriate. The Evaluation plan includes both formative and summative evaluation and the purposes of each are provided. The strategy described on pages 60-61 provides a clear framework for the evaluation design while allowing the evaluator to develop the specifics. The summative data to be collected pertaining to #4 (the extent to which authorizer renewals of subgrant schools are based on the school's performance under the federal CSP grant project) is very pertinent to the purpose of the grant.

Weaknesses:

Some of the summative data to be collected, such as #7 (the number of highest-performing charter school's promising and innovative practices identified by the state) are beyond the scope and control of the grant.

Reader's Score: 8

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Periodic Review and Evaluation

1. **Periodic Review and Evaluation (up to 10 points).** The State provides for periodic review and evaluation by the authorized public chartering agency of each charter school at least once every five years, unless required more frequently by State law, to determine whether the charter school is meeting the terms of the school's charter, and is meeting or exceeding the student academic achievement requirements and goals for charter schools as set forth under State law or the schools charter.

Note: The Secretary invites the applicant to provide information regarding whether the periodic review that takes place at least once every five years includes a public vote on whether to terminate, extend, or renew a school's charter and on whether a failure to affirmatively renew or extend a schools charter during the periodic review that takes place at least once every five years would result in the charter school being closed.

Strengths:

To address unsatisfactory student achievement in State charter schools, the charter school law was revised in 2009 and included State authority to approve authorizers. This approval is based on capacity and infrastructure, application criteria and process, contracting process, ongoing oversight and evaluation processes, and renewal criteria and processes. Data from the approval process is used to improve future reviews and identify both individual and collective areas of need.

Weaknesses:

Average student achievement in charter schools in the State is below total state averages. The application would be strengthened by citing disaggregated group data and showcasing quality schools, particularly those that have received CSP subgrants.

Reader's Score: 8

Competitive Preference Priority - Number of High-Quality Charter Schools

- 1. Number of High-Quality Charter Schools (up to 8 points).** The State has demonstrated progress in increasing the number of high-quality charter schools that are held accountable in the terms of the school's charter for meeting clear and measurable objectives for the educational progress of the students attending the schools, in the period prior to the period for which an SEA applies for a grant under this competition.

Note: The Secretary invites the applicant to provide the following information: (1) its definition of a "high-quality charter school"; (2) the number of "high-quality charter schools" in the State and a description of how the rate has changed over the past five years; and (3) the percentage of "high-quality charter schools" in the State and a description of how the percentage has changed over the past five years.

Strengths:

The State is now using a Growth Model that is well explained, tracking students from year to year to assist in determining the quality of the school. The grant proposes to create a comprehensive state charter school accountability framework. Minnesota is serving a significantly higher percentage of at risk students than non-charter schools.

Weaknesses:

The chart on page 5 shows disturbing trends for both charter schools and non-charter schools in the State that have made AYP each year from 2006-2007 and 2009-2010. The charters dropped significantly in 2007-2008 and took 2 years to come back to where they started. Non-charters, which began almost 20% points above them, are now even. It is not clear why only 1/3 of the State's charter school sites were measured using the Growth Model in 2010. The explanation included low participation rates, low sample sizes, and a limitation on grades and students tested each year. It would appear that these barriers could be overcome in a significant number of schools. This definition of high quality is not based on the multiple measures described on page 5, which included organizational and financial factors. Given the limitations described it is difficult to determine the validity or the importance of the statement that 55% of the included 17% of all charter sites earned the status of "high quality charter schools" in 2008-2009 compared to 67% of 24% in 2009-2010. The State could also consider a separate process for determining high quality in a dropout retrieval school.

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority - Authorizer Other Than LEA or Appeals Process

- 1. One Authorized Public Chartering Agency Other than a Local Educational Agency (LEA), or an Appeals Process (5 points).** The State:

(a) Provides for one authorized public chartering agency that is not an LEA, such as a State chartering board, for each individual or entity seeking to operate a charter school pursuant to State law; or

(b) In the case of a State in which LEA's are the only authorized public chartering agencies, allows for an appeals process for the denial of an application for a charter school.

PLEASE NOTE: Reviewers must assign a score of 0 or 5, but nothing in between.

Strengths:

The state does have multiple authorizers, including districts (single, intermediate, and education), charitable organizations, colleges (private, community, state university, and technical), nonprofit corporations that have existed for at least 25 years, and single purpose authorizers. Any group currently authorizing must now be approved prior to authorizing a new school or renewing a current contract.

Weaknesses:

An appeals process is not mentioned, nor is a requirement for a public meeting. The number of different types of authorizers appears to have contributed to the lack of overall quality in prior years.

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority - High Degree of Autonomy

1. **High Degree of Autonomy (up to 5 points).** The State ensures that each charter school has a high degree of autonomy over the charter school's budget and expenditures.

Strengths:

Charter schools in the State are considered LEAs and as such are fiscally independent and operate autonomously from school districts.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Achievement and HS Graduation Rates

1. **Improving Achievement and High School Graduation Rates (up to 12 points).** Projects that are designed to address one or more of the following priority areas:

(a) **Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) and college enrollment rates for students in rural local educational agencies (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) (up to 3 points).**

(b) **Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) and college enrollment rates for students with disabilities (up to 3 points).**

(c) **Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) and college enrollment rates for English learners (up to 3 points).**

(d) **Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates and college enrollment rates in high-poverty schools (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) (up to 3 points).**

Note: For each population of students for which the applicant is seeking competitive priority points, the Secretary invites the applicant to discuss the steps it would take to meet the priority. For example, the applicant could describe any guidance or support it would provide to charter school developers to assist such developers in recruiting and providing high-quality services to students who are members of the particular student population(s); how it would monitor charter schools in the State to ensure that they are taking effective and active steps to recruit and enroll students who are members of the particular student population(s); how it would monitor charter schools in the State to ensure that students who are members of the particular student population(s) are being served by such schools; or how it would design its subgrant competition, which may include the use of preferences, to ensure that students who are members of the particular student population(s) are being served at rates equal to or greater than such students are being served in other schools in the area.

General:

The State has made inroads in improving high school results by developing a framework to address a variety of supports for redesign. This framework is available online for all high schools, including charters. It includes the Educational Planning and Assessment System, increasing access to Advance Placement classes, International Baccalaureate and

College Level Examination Programs. The CSP application process for subgrants will provide preference points for those that propose high schools designed to improve high school achievement and graduation rates. Although rural areas, special education and ELL students are mentioned, it is not clear that addressing these particular groups is required to earn the points. Neither the effective recruitment nor the monitoring of these populations is addressed.

Reader's Score: 9

Competitive Preference Priority - Promoting Diversity

- 1. Promoting Diversity (up to 5 points). Projects that are designed to promote student diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, or avoid racial isolation.**

Note: The Secretary invites the applicant to discuss how it would design its subgrant competition to meet this priority.

Strengths:

Preference points will be awarded for subgrant applicants that propose schools that are designed to promote student diversity. Charter schools in the State currently serve a significantly higher percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch, ELL students, and students with disabilities.

Weaknesses:

The priority for diversity, as explained, stresses recruitment of students, not the design of the school.

Reader's Score: 4

Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Productivity

- 1. Improving Productivity (up to 5 points). Projects that are designed to significantly increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources while improving student learning or other educational outcomes (i.e., outcomes per unit of resource). Such projects may include innovative and sustainable uses of technology, modification of school schedules and teacher compensation systems, use of open educational resources (as defined in the Federal Register Notice), or other strategies.**

Strengths:

Preference points will be provided to subgrant applications that articulate specific strategies to improve efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources. The purposes for this improvement are outlined as well, and focus on increases in student achievement.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 05/05/2011 09:52 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 05/11/2011 03:28 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Minnesota Department of Education (U282A110017)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Assisting students in meeting standards		
1. Meeting standards	20	11
Flexibility Afforded by State Law		
1. Flexibility	20	20
Number of high-quality charters to be created		
1. Charters to be created	20	14
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management plan	10	8
Authorizer Accountability		
1. Authorizer Accountability	20	20
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project evaluation	10	10
Sub Total	100	83
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Periodic Review and Evaluation		
1. Periodic Review and Eval	10	8
Number of High-Quality Charter Schools		
1. High-quality charters	8	7
Authorizer Other Than LEA or Appeals Process		
1. Alt. Authorizer, Appeals	5	5
High Degree of Autonomy		
1. High Degree of Autonomy	5	5
Improving Achievement and HS Graduation Rates		
1. Achievement & grad rates	12	6
Promoting Diversity		
1. Promoting Diversity	5	5
Improving Productivity		
1. Improving Productivity	5	2
Sub Total	50	38

Total

150

121

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - FY11 CSP SEA panel - 2 - 1: 84.282A

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Minnesota Department of Education (U282A110017)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Assisting students in meeting standards

1. (1) The contribution the charter schools grant program will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged and other students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards (20 points).

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

Strengths:

The four objectives of the current grant reflect the State's priority to increase the performance of charter schools and the quality of authorizing.

Weaknesses:

The development of a new accountability framework may affect the charter schools that are currently rated as "highly qualified". The accountability framework in Objective 2 is not scheduled to be completed and implemented until the end of the second year of the grant. This delayed timeline may adversely affect the ability of the grant to be completed in three years.

Reader's Score: 11

Selection Criteria - Flexibility Afforded by State Law

1. The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA to charter schools under the State's charter school law (20 points).

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe how the State's charter school law establishes an administrative relationship between charter schools 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 describe the degree of autonomy charter schools in the State exercise over such matters as the charter school's budgets, expenditures, daily operation, schedules, curricula, and personnel in accordance with the State's charter school law.

Strengths:

Minnesota charter schools are independent LEA's and are exempt from many rules that apply to traditional schools. Charter schools have the ability to be more flexible, innovative, and efficient.

The Minnesota charter school law ranks high among charter school laws in the country which increases the accountability and authority of the authorizers.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Number of high-quality charters to be created

1. The number of high-quality charter schools to be created in the State (20 points).

Note: The Secretary considers the SEA's reasonable estimate of the number of new high-quality charter schools that will be authorized and opened in the State during the project period.

The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe, in detail, its charter school subgrant application and peer review processes, how the peer review process will assess quality, and how the SEA will ensure that only high-quality charter school applicants (as defined by the applicant) are selected for funding. States that have received grants under this program previously are invited to provide data on the percentages of eligible applicants that were awarded sub-grants and how this percentage related to the overall quality of applicants funded.

Strengths:

The subgrant application process includes a peer review process and utilizes a rubric which is scored and then shared with reviewers for accuracy. It is a strong process that emphasizes diversity in its peer participants, training of peers, and discussion of reviewers comments before final decisions are made.

Weaknesses:

The Minnesota charter school office projects up to 15 new subgrants to be awarded in year one and 20 subgrants per year through year five. There are 5 new charter schools expected to open in year one and 15 new schools in year two. Under the current legislation, 7 new charter schools have expressed an interest in applying for funds under the new CSP grant. The chart projecting yearly increase in the number of charter schools may need to be revised given the current data. The accuracy of prediction in the CSP subgrant applications might need to be revised.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. Quality of the management plan (10 points). In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers (a) 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; and (b) 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's 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 (20 U.S.C. 7221b (b) (2) (A) and (B) and 7221e(a)).

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe any compliance issues or findings related to the CSP that have been identified in an audit or other monitoring review, as well as the steps taken to address such compliance issues or findings.

Strengths:

Minnesota Department of Education has staff with multiple years of experience with charter schools in Minnesota.

The objectives described have activities, responsibilities, timeline and milestones.

The funding for new charter schools is included as well as funding for adding a new grade level.

The Minnesota Department of Education is addressing all the evaluation findings from West Ed from 2010.

Weaknesses:

One of the strategies under objective 1 of the current grant is to identify high performing schools in Minnesota and other States (Strategy 1.2), but there is no mention of the criteria that the schools have to meet to be considered models to be replicated.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - 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 (20 points).**

Strengths:

The Minnesota charter school office is focusing upon several functions for authorizers to meet as well as what authorizers have to do to maintain accountability which will lead to the new accountability framework.

There is a strong authorizer accountability framework (page 55) so the authorizer is being held to the same standard as the charter school

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

- 1. Quality of the project evaluation (10 points). 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 the 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:

MDE has learned a lot from the last external evaluation in 2010 and has clear expectations for the next evaluation period.

MDE will utilize a competitive bidding process. The RFP will include specific criteria to be met. Once the contract is awarded there will be a close working relationship between the contractor and the MDE.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Periodic Review and Evaluation

1. **Periodic Review and Evaluation (up to 10 points).** The State provides for periodic review and evaluation by the authorized public chartering agency of each charter school at least once every five years, unless required more frequently by State law, to determine whether the charter school is meeting the terms of the school's charter, and is meeting or exceeding the student academic achievement requirements and goals for charter schools as set forth under State law or the schools charter.

Note: The Secretary invites the applicant to provide information regarding whether the periodic review that takes place at least once every five years includes a public vote on whether to terminate, extend, or renew a school's charter and on whether a failure to affirmatively renew or extend a schools charter during the periodic review that takes place at least once every five years would result in the charter school being closed.

Strengths:

The Minnesota legislature revised the charter school authorizer process as a way of increasing accountability. The authorizer standards are based upon the National Association of Charter School Authorizers Principles.

Weaknesses:

The Minnesota Department of Education has approved 100 charter schools in the current grant, but the data provided indicates that charter schools lag being student achievement in traditional schools in math and reading. Additional data would have been helpful (e.g. demographics) regarding the types of students that attend charter schools vs. traditional schools and other factors that may have influenced these results.

There is little information about how charter schools are closed.

Reader's Score: 8

Competitive Preference Priority - Number of High-Quality Charter Schools

1. **Number of High-Quality Charter Schools (up to 8 points).** The State has demonstrated progress in increasing the number of high-quality charter schools that are held accountable in the terms of the school's charter for meeting clear and measurable objectives for the educational progress of the students attending the schools, in the period prior to the period for which an SEA applies for a grant under this competition.

Note: The Secretary invites the applicant to provide the following information: (1) its definition of a "high-quality charter school"; (2) the number of "high-quality charter schools" in the State and a description of how the rate has changed over the past five years; and (3) the percentage of "high-quality charter schools" in the State and a description of how the percentage has changed over the past five years.

Strengths:

Minnesota charter schools attract a unique student population which could account for the lower student achievement scores.

The MDE uses a growth model of student achievement and has an interim definition of a "high quality" charter school that relies upon one indicator currently but will be expanded to include multiple indicators.

Weaknesses:

There is a gap to show that students in charter schools underperform students in non-charters.

Reader's Score: 7

Competitive Preference Priority - Authorizer Other Than LEA or Appeals Process

1. **One Authorized Public Chartering Agency Other than a Local Educational Agency (LEA), or an Appeals Process (5 points).** The State:

(a) Provides for one authorized public chartering agency that is not an LEA, such as a State chartering board, for each individual or entity seeking to operate a charter school pursuant to State law; or

(b) In the case of a State in which LEA's are the only authorized public chartering agencies, allows for an appeals process for the denial of an application for a charter school.

PLEASE NOTE: Reviewers must assign a score of 0 or 5, but nothing in between.

Strengths:

Minnesota law allows for multiple authorizers.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority - High Degree of Autonomy

1. **High Degree of Autonomy (up to 5 points).** The State ensures that each charter school has a high degree

of autonomy over the charter school's budget and expenditures.

Strengths:

Minnesota charter schools are considered to be their own LEA's, are fiscally separate and operate independently from school districts.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Achievement and HS Graduation Rates

1. Improving Achievement and High School Graduation Rates (up to 12 points). Projects that are designed to address one or more of the following priority areas:

(a) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) and college enrollment rates for students in rural local educational agencies (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) (up to 3 points).

(b) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) and college enrollment rates for students with disabilities (up to 3 points).

(c) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) and college enrollment rates for English learners (up to 3 points).

(d) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates and college enrollment rates in high-poverty schools (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) (up to 3 points).

Note: For each population of students for which the applicant is seeking competitive priority points, the Secretary invites the applicant to discuss the steps it would take to meet the priority. For example, the applicant could describe any guidance or support it would provide to charter school developers to assist such developers in recruiting and providing high-quality services to students who are members of the particular student population(s); how it would monitor charter schools in the State to ensure that they are taking effective and active steps to recruit and enroll students who are members of the particular student population(s); how it would monitor charter schools in the State to ensure that students who are members of the particular student population(s) are being served by such schools; or how it would design its subgrant competition, which may include the use of preferences, to ensure that students who are members of the particular student population(s) are being served at rates equal to or greater than such students are being served in other schools in the area.

General:

MDE will provide priority points to subgrant applicants that propose schools to increase graduation rates and student achievement. The new MDE initiatives, e.g. Systemic High School Redesign and Connecting for High School to Postsecondary provide a strong framework for the development of subgrant applications to focus on the CSP grant objectives.

The current grant proposes to establish multiple accountability measures including increasing the number of students graduating high school, increasing the number of students enrolling and completing rigorous courses, and decreasing the number of students dropping out. The goals of the CSP grant are realistic and address the needs of the school community.

Reader's Score: 6

Competitive Preference Priority - Promoting Diversity

1. **Promoting Diversity (up to 5 points).** Projects that are designed to promote student diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, or avoid racial isolation.

Note: The Secretary invites the applicant to discuss how it would design its subgrant competition to meet this priority.

Strengths:

Minnesota charter schools have long served a diverse student population. There is an accompanying chart that indicates the current diversity of demographics of charter schools as compared to non-charter schools.

MDE will give up to 5 points for applications that promote student diversity

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Productivity

1. **Improving Productivity (up to 5 points).** Projects that are designed to significantly increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources while improving student learning or other educational outcomes (i.e., outcomes per unit of resource). Such projects may include innovative and sustainable uses of technology, modification of school schedules and teacher compensation systems, use of open educational resources (as defined in the Federal Register Notice), or other strategies.

Strengths:

The current application for CSP funds provides additional points for applications that propose strategies to improve productivity.

Weaknesses:

There are several strategies listed to improve productivity but there is no current data to indicate if these strategies are improving productivity.

The MDE grant has not provided any indicators of productivity in the past, so there is little existing data to support this preference.

Reader's Score: 2

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 05/11/2011 03:28 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 05/06/2011 12:04 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Minnesota Department of Education (U282A110017)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Assisting students in meeting standards		
1. Meeting standards	20	16
Flexibility Afforded by State Law		
1. Flexibility	20	19
Number of high-quality charters to be created		
1. Charters to be created	20	20
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management plan	10	7
Authorizer Accountability		
1. Authorizer Accountability	20	19
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project evaluation	10	10
Sub Total	100	91
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Periodic Review and Evaluation		
1. Periodic Review and Eval	10	9
Number of High-Quality Charter Schools		
1. High-quality charters	8	5
Authorizer Other Than LEA or Appeals Process		
1. Alt. Authorizer, Appeals	5	5
High Degree of Autonomy		
1. High Degree of Autonomy	5	3
Improving Achievement and HS Graduation Rates		
1. Achievement & grad rates	12	6
Promoting Diversity		
1. Promoting Diversity	5	5
Improving Productivity		
1. Improving Productivity	5	3
Sub Total	50	36

Total

150

127

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - FY11 CSP SEA panel - 2 - 1: 84.282A

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Minnesota Department of Education (U282A110017)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Assisting students in meeting standards

1. (1) The contribution the charter schools grant program will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged and other students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards (20 points).

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to provide a description of the objectives for the SEA's charter school grant program and to explain how these objectives will be met, including steps that will be 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:

Subgrant preferences will include one for replication of high-performing schools.

There is commendable involvement of stakeholders in developing the accountability framework.

MN has an initial grant from NACSA in furtherance of the state's important work on authorizer accountability.

The applicant acknowledges shortcomings in prior dissemination efforts and proposes to make it a priority looking forward.

There is an extensive outreach program proposed here.

Weaknesses:

It's not clear how new schools can meet the quality definition if the interim definition is derived from current performance data.

Reader's Score: 16

Selection Criteria - Flexibility Afforded by State Law

1. The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA to charter schools under the State's charter school law (20 points).

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe how the State's charter school law establishes an administrative relationship between charter schools 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 describe the degree of autonomy charter schools in the State exercise over such matters as the charter school's budgets, expenditures, daily operation, schedules, curricula, and personnel in accordance with the State's charter school law.

Strengths:

There is a broad waiver authority in state statute.

Both NAPCS and CER agree on the quality of the state's law.

The law is clear not only on LEA status but on the Board's authority over operations, budgeting, and curriculum.

Administrators are free from licensure rules.
State law provides separation of unionized charters from district collective bargaining.
Boards are elected rather than appointed.
MDE affirms clear separation between the role of the authorizer and school-level functions.

Weaknesses:

Charters must hire licensed teachers.

Reader's Score: 19

Selection Criteria - Number of high-quality charters to be created

1. The number of high-quality charter schools to be created in the State (20 points).

Note: The Secretary considers the SEA's reasonable estimate of the number of new high-quality charter schools that will be authorized and opened in the State during the project period. The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe, in detail, its charter school subgrant application and peer review processes, how the peer review process will assess quality, and how the SEA will ensure that only high-quality charter school applicants (as defined by the applicant) are selected for funding. States that have received grants under this program previously are invited to provide data on the percentages of eligible applicants that were awarded sub-grants and how this percentage related to the overall quality of applicants funded.

Strengths:

The applicant asks for a waiver so additional grant funds can go toward expansion of high-quality schools, given the constraints posed for new startups under the state's push toward higher accountability.
There is an excellent analysis of what the likely numbers will be based on multiple factors.
It's good that capacity to expand is given a significant point score (as applicable)
The percentage of "combined" and "decoupled" applications approved speaks well of the applicant's review standards.
There is a novel approach to spreading best practices through "mini-grants" which provide a better incentive for high-performing schools to participate than the conventional dissemination grants; this also addresses a weakness in the prior grant period.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. Quality of the management plan (10 points). In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers (a) 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; and (b) 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 (20 U.S.C. 7221b (b) (2) (A) and (B) and 7221e(a)).

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe any compliance issues or findings related to the CSP that have been identified in an audit or other monitoring review, as well as the steps taken to

address such compliance issues or findings.

Strengths:

First, there is a strong project team already in place at MDE, to be supplemented by a new position for development of the accountability framework.

It's good to see that the state agency is willing to take an active role in facilitating matches between authorizers and effective operators.

Weaknesses:

Monthly "desk monitoring" of expenditure reports sounds aggressive -- but may make sense in MN's accountability environment.

Similarly, the monitoring of performance reports seems responsible - -but will it veer into territory of authorizers (and possibly incur overlapping reporting requirements for schools).

The relationship between MDE and authorizers around the accountability framework could be clearer. It's not clear, for example, whether this is the full template they'll use, or a basic document they will add to.

The proposal doesn't mention how "collateral damage" from the authorizer-approval process will be mitigated. In other words, if authorizers are reviewed periodically, there may need to be some way of assuring that sound charter schools don't suffer disruption or "orphaning" if an authorizer is put out of business.

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - 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 (20 points).**

Strengths:

This section is grounded in a terrifically concise and compelling theory of action (p. e55).

MN's system does not shy away from evaluating authorizer performance and the applicant seems very clear about the specific steps MDE should take to advance the authorizer's role in charter improvement.

Weaknesses:

This section might have benefited from a little more discussion of the statutory framework for oversight, which is the strongest in the country.

Reader's Score: 19

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

- 1. Quality of the project evaluation (10 points). 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 the 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:

This is an excellent narrative on evaluation. Particularly striking is the specificity about CSP funding's role in ultimate outcomes -- rather than pulling punches and substituting "process indicators."

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Periodic Review and Evaluation

1. **Periodic Review and Evaluation (up to 10 points).** The State provides for periodic review and evaluation by the authorized public chartering agency of each charter school at least once every five years, unless required more frequently by State law, to determine whether the charter school is meeting the terms of the school's charter, and is meeting or exceeding the student academic achievement requirements and goals for charter schools as set forth under State law or the schools charter.

Note: The Secretary invites the applicant to provide information regarding whether the periodic review that takes place at least once every five years includes a public vote on whether to terminate, extend, or renew a school's charter and on whether a failure to affirmatively renew or extend a schools charter during the periodic review that takes place at least once every five years would result in the charter school being closed.

Strengths:

MN has established a shorter initial charter term than most other states, but also requires "ongoing" oversight by authorizers and a high-stakes review pre-renewal.

The authorizer-oversight system takes into account whether they have followed through on oversight and evaluation; there is a commissioner-level review of authorizers every five years.

Weaknesses:

If there is any early evidence about how the authorizer-accountability system has already produced changes or improvements in review processes, it would have been good to include it here.

Reader's Score: 9

Competitive Preference Priority - Number of High-Quality Charter Schools

1. **Number of High-Quality Charter Schools (up to 8 points).** The State has demonstrated progress in increasing the number of high-quality charter schools that are held accountable in the terms of the school's charter for meeting clear and measurable objectives for the educational progress of the students attending the schools, in the period prior to the period for which an SEA applies for a grant under this competition.

Note: The Secretary invites the applicant to provide the following information: (1) its definition of a "high-quality charter school"; (2) the number of "high-quality charter schools" in the State and a description of how the rate has changed over the past five years; and (3) the percentage of "high-quality charter schools" in the State and a description of how the percentage has changed over the past five years.

Strengths:

The applicant presents an elegant discussion of quality, including the limitations of the current growth model and the number of schools that are not captured.

The quality definition itself is precise and derived from growth data as compared to state averages.

There has been progress in closing the AYP gap -- although as noted it is caused more by other schools failing to make AYP at a greater rate.

Weaknesses:

The data here are "interim: as there is a new framework being prepared.

It would have been useful to see more on the actual track record of the 100 schools created under the prior grant period -- since this question really addresses "progress."

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority - Authorizer Other Than LEA or Appeals Process

1. **One Authorized Public Chartering Agency Other than a Local Educational Agency (LEA), or an Appeals Process (5 points).** The State:

(a) Provides for one authorized public chartering agency that is not an LEA, such as a State chartering board, for each individual or entity seeking to operate a charter school pursuant to State law; or

(b) In the case of a State in which LEA's are the only authorized public chartering agencies, allows for an appeals process for the denial of an application for a charter school.

PLEASE NOTE: Reviewers must assign a score of 0 or 5, but nothing in between.

Strengths:

Many authorizers -- in fact, the state is culling the herd.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority - High Degree of Autonomy

1. **High Degree of Autonomy (up to 5 points).** The State ensures that each charter school has a high degree

of autonomy over the charter school's budget and expenditures.

Strengths:

There's an impressive list of state-provided revenues -- MN is one of only 11 states that provide direct facilities aid, and also provides transportation and startup funds.

Charters have LEA status and operate autonomously.

Weaknesses:

The response doesn't specifically say how autonomy over "budget and expenditures" is protected.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Achievement and HS Graduation Rates

1. Improving Achievement and High School Graduation Rates (up to 12 points). Projects that are designed to address one or more of the following priority areas:

(a) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) and college enrollment rates for students in rural local educational agencies (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) (up to 3 points).

(b) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) and college enrollment rates for students with disabilities (up to 3 points).

c) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) and college enrollment rates for English learners (up to 3 points).

(d) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates and college enrollment rates in high-poverty schools (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) (up to 3 points).

Note: For each population of students for which the applicant is seeking competitive priority points, the Secretary invites the applicant to discuss the steps it would take to meet the priority. For example, the applicant could describe any guidance or support it would provide to charter school developers to assist such developers in recruiting and providing high-quality services to students who are members of the particular student population(s); how it would monitor charter schools in the State to ensure that they are taking effective and active steps to recruit and enroll students who are members of the particular student population(s); how it would monitor charter schools in the State to ensure that students who are members of the particular student population(s) are being served by such schools; or how it would design its subgrant competition, which may include the use of preferences, to ensure that students who are members of the particular student population(s) are being served at rates equal to or greater than such students are being served in other schools in the area.

General:

MN is making a large play on secondary improvement through the two major initiatives noted here.

Charters will be encouraged to participate and preference will be given to CSP applications proposing to do so.

The proposal describes required training for charter school operators on IDEA, as well as a special education "primer," both of which should assist this population in attainment.

The Center for Postsecondary Success will inform development of the accountability framework with multiple measures noted.

But since charter participation in these programs is so low, it's unclear whether these measures will be sufficient to produce much impact.

In general, there's very little discussion of how charters specifically are (or are not) addressing the needs of these populations, and what the applicant proposes to do about it.

Reader's Score: 6

Competitive Preference Priority - Promoting Diversity

- 1. Promoting Diversity (up to 5 points).** Projects that are designed to promote student diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, or avoid racial isolation.

Note: The Secretary invites the applicant to discuss how it would design its subgrant competition to meet this priority.

Strengths:

This is an area in which Minnesota already excels, as noted in the application.

The applicant demonstrates some sophistication in this response by adding points for diversity but stressing that schools should "avoid racial isolation or... 're-segregation."

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Productivity

- 1. Improving Productivity (up to 5 points).** Projects that are designed to significantly increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources while improving student learning or other educational outcomes (i.e., outcomes per unit of resource). Such projects may include innovative and sustainable uses of technology, modification of school schedules and teacher compensation systems, use of open educational resources (as defined in the Federal Register Notice), or other strategies.

Strengths:

The applicant proposes to add up to 5 preference points for applications with strategies to increase productivity. It's encouraging that the narrative is more about efficiency and sharing than about technological fixes.

Weaknesses:

The response seems to conflate "productivity" and "innovation." Not all of the state purposes mentioned have much to do with productivity.

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 05/06/2011 12:04 PM