

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

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Colorado Department of Education (U282A150018)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
State-Level Strategy		
1. State-Level Strategy	15	14
Sub Total	15	14
Selection Criteria		
Policy Context for Charter Schools		
1. Policy Context	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Selection Criteria		
Past Performance		
1. Past Performance	10	9
Quality of Plan to Support Ed. Dis. Students		
1. Ed. Dis. Students	15	13
Vision for Growth and Accountability		
1. Growth and Accountability	10	8
Dissemination of Information and Best Practices		
1. Dissemination	10	6
Oversight of Public Chartering Agencies		
1. Oversight of Authorizers	15	13
Management Plan and Theory of Action		
1. Management Plan	10	10
Project Design		
1. Project Design	10	8
Sub Total	80	67
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
High-Quality Authorizing and Monitoring Processes		
1. CPP 1	15	15
Sub Total	15	15
Competitive Preference Priority		
Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process		

1. CPP 2

	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Total	120	106

Technical Review Form

Panel #19 - SEA Panel - 20: 84.282A

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Colorado Department of Education (U282A150018)

Questions

Selection Criteria - State-Level Strategy

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the State-level strategy for using charter schools to improve educational outcomes for students throughout the State. In determining the quality of the State-level strategy, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The extent to which the SEA 's CSP activities, including the subgrant program, are integrated into the State s overall strategy for improving student academic achievement and attainment (including high school graduation rates and college and other postsecondary education enrollment rates) and closing achievement and attainment gaps, and complement or leverage other statewide education reform efforts;

2) The extent to which funding equity for charter schools (including equitable funding for charter school facilities) is incorporated into the SEA' s State-level strategy; and

3) The extent to which the State encourages local strategies for improving student academic achievement and attainment that involve charter schools, including but not limited to the following:

i. Collaboration, including the sharing of data and promising instructional and other practices, between charter schools and other public schools or providers of early learning and development programs or alternative education programs; and

ii. The creation of charter schools that would serve as viable options for students who currently attend, or would otherwise attend, the State 's lowest-performing schools.

Strengths:

Charter schools in Colorado now educate 11.4% of publicly-educated PK-12 students statewide, which is bigger than Colorado's largest LEA. This growth demonstrates the significance of embracing charter schools in a meaningful context.

The applicant provides a clear description of how the sub-grant program will align with the state's current reform efforts specifically in high needs areas and building capacity for all local districts.

The applicant indicates that the charter market is moving with momentum and support for charter schools has become intentionally integrated across the Department of Education.

In support of the Charter School movement, Colorado's Legislature and Board of Education created a multi-front reform agenda that includes a list of initiatives included on page 12. These initiatives are far reaching and range for School Readiness and Early Literacy to Turnaround Systems addressing the State's Lowest Performing Schools. These initiatives are significant considering Colorado's charter sector has outperformed the non-charter sector of public schools, particularly in reading and math, page 12.

Since funding equity is included in the State Law, it is clearly incorporated into the SEA's State-level strategy and a major strength that contributes to a strong start for new charter schools and continued support for existing charters schools.

Equitable per pupil funding, district facility access, equity in grant application/funding, charter school capital construction fund, Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) grants are each described as available to charter schools as prescribed in the law. Pages, 20-21, providing charter schools with the same advantage as traditional public schools.

Charter School Capital Construction Fund allocations are provided in Table 3.a.2 on page 21 and provides a clear projection of funding to be provided over a four year period having begun in 2012-13 through 2015-16.

In support of collaboration, the applicant intends to build capacity among authorizers, board members, administrators and staff at new and existing charter schools with a specific focus on effective school leadership, high-impact educational practices, and engagement in continuous school improvement, among other important factors, page 14.

The applicant intends to provide the necessary support to create charter schools that serve as a viable option that best suits their community. Toward this effort, the applicant plans to offer technical assistance in a collaborative manner, working alongside schools and LEAs to assist in navigating the choices and options available to them.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not adequately address collaboration specifically related to providers of early learning and alternative education programs.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Policy Context for Charter Schools

1. The Secretary considers the policy context for charter schools under the proposed project. In determining the policy context for charter schools under the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The degree of flexibility afforded to charter schools under the State's charter school law, including:

i. The extent to which charter schools in the State are exempt from State or local rules that inhibit the flexible operation and management of public schools; and

ii. The extent to which charter schools in the State have a high degree of autonomy, including autonomy over the charter school's budget, expenditures, staffing, procurement, and curriculum;

2) The quality of the SEA's processes for:

i. Annually informing each charter school in the State about Federal funds the charter school is eligible to receive and Federal programs in which the charter school may participate; and

ii. Annually ensuring that each charter school in the State receives, in a timely fashion, the school's commensurate share of Federal funds that are allocated by formula each year, particularly during the first year of operation of the school and during a year in which the school's enrollment expands significantly; and

3) The quality of the SEA's plan to ensure that charter schools that are considered to be LEAs under State law and LEAs in which charter schools are located will comply with sections 613(a)(5) and 613(e)(1)(B) of IDEA (20 U.S.C. 1400, et seq.), the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (42 U.S.C. 6101, et seq.), title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d, et seq.), title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. 1681, et seq.), and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794).

Strengths:

The charter schools have a great degree of flexibility which is provided in Colorado state law and waivers are routinely granted. Based on recent amendments to state law, there are now two types of state waivers a charter school can seek, automatic and non-automatic. These two types of waivers are clearly explained on page 22 and Appendix E.1 includes a list of commonly-pursued waivers. Creating this option will save time of charter schools that have traditionally had to wait

for a response from the state to move forward with activities that are time-sensitive for program implementation.

Access to federal funds and programming is clearly addressed and included in the Colorado state statues referred to on page 23.

Multiple activities are undertaken to ensure each Charter School is informed on an annual basis about State and federal funds that charters are eligible to receive, along with programs in which they can participate. Examples of the activities provided include CDE training of federal programs, development of a protocol for reviewing the Consolidated Application strategy-based budget to ensure inclusion of charter schools, and others outlined on page 23-24.

The applicant clearly describes the Charter school and LEA assurances regarding State law and federal law.

The applicant indicates that questions of noncompliance are investigated and addressed through a corrective action plan process, pages 26. This process will provide a timely solution to any violations that may surface.

Weaknesses:

No weakness were noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Past Performance

1. The Secretary considers the past performance of charter schools in a State that enacted a charter school law for the first time five or more years before submission of its application. In determining the past performance of charter schools in such a State, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The extent to which there has been a demonstrated increase, for each of the past five years, in the number and percentage of high-quality charter schools (as defined in this notice) in the State;

2) The extent to which there has been a demonstrated reduction, for each of the past five years, in the number and percentage of academically poor-performing charter schools (as defined in this notice) in the State; and

3) Whether, and the extent to which, the academic achievement and academic attainment (including high school graduation rates and college and other postsecondary education enrollment rates) of charter school students equal or exceed the academic achievement and academic attainment of similar students in other public schools in the State over the past five years.

Strengths:

Evidence is provided that there has been an increase in the number and percentage of high-quality charter schools in the state (Table 3.c.1) on page 27. Schools are determined to be high-quality based on Colorado's school accountability system. Explanations are provided for dips in the data in 2011 and is based on the opening of 8 new charter schools for at-risk middle and high school students.

The number and percentage of academically poor-performing charters are minimal compared to high performing charters based on the data provided in Table 3.c.2 on page 27. The applicant indicates that these schools are defined as charter schools operating 3 or more years and identified as Turnaround or Priority Improvement under Colorado's accountability system.

The applicant indicates that of the 20 low performing schools in 2012, 5 were closed, 10 improved, and 5 continue to be at risk for closure after intermittent performance. These data support the SEA's commitment to reducing the number of low performing charter schools and supporting the schools that need technical assistance to continue.

Evidence of student academic achievement, graduation rates, and postsecondary enrollment rates is provided through a series of tables and narrative explanations on pages 29-34. These data substantiate that students in charters across demographics show academic achievement and attainment equal to or exceeding academic achievement and attainment of students in other district schools.

The applicant intends to do further analysis of data for high school graduation and postsecondary enrollment rates to determine causal factors that may explain why data is flat for charter schools across these two dimensions. Further analysis could have significant implications for charter schools and traditional public schools

Weaknesses:

Though the number of academically poor-performing charter schools are low as compared to the number of high performing charter schools, there has been an increase of poor-performing charter schools over the last five years as reflected in data provided on page 27 3.c.2.

Reader's Score: 9

Selection Criteria - Quality of Plan to Support Ed. Dis. Students

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the SEA 's plan to support educationally disadvantaged students. In determining the quality of the plan to support educationally disadvantaged students, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The extent to which the SEA' s charter school subgrant program would--

i. Assist students, particularly educationally disadvantaged students, in meeting and exceeding State academic content standards and State student achievement standards; and

ii. Reduce or eliminate achievement gaps for educationally disadvantaged students;

2) The quality of the SEA 's plan to ensure that charter schools attract, recruit, admit, enroll, serve, and retain educationally disadvantaged students equitably, meaningfully, and, with regard to educationally disadvantaged students who are students with disabilities or English learners, in a manner consistent with, as appropriate, the IDEA (regarding students with disabilities) and civil rights laws, in particular, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;

3) The extent to which the SEA will encourage innovations in charter schools, such as models, policies, supports, or structures, that are designed to improve the academic achievement of educationally disadvantaged students; and

4) The quality of the SEA 's plan for monitoring all charter schools to ensure compliance with Federal and State laws, particularly laws related to educational equity, nondiscrimination, and access to public schools for educationally disadvantaged students.

Strengths:

The SEA describes a commitment to assist educationally disadvantaged students by targeting sub-grant competition's Selection Criteria on key elements, such as how the school will meet the needs of educationally disadvantaged and at-risk students. This language is included in Appendix E.3 on page 39 and will ensure applicants give this criteria strong consideration as they develop their application.

Another major strength of the application is the focus on technical assistance, ensuring that the charter schools have what they need to produce high quality outcomes for students.

The applicant will continue to rely on a strong data collection and analysis system to ensure programs are implemented with fidelity and yield positive results, particularly for educationally disadvantaged students, page 31.

The strength of the SEA's plan to ensure that charter schools attract, recruit, admit, enroll, serve, and retain educationally disadvantaged students will be addressed through a weighted lottery policy referenced on page 31 and in Appendix e.6. The strength of this policy is that it encourages and incentivizes charter schools to attract, recruit, admit, enroll, serve and retain educationally disadvantaged students.

Additionally, CDE intends to provide additional priority points under the CSP grant Selection Criteria to schools that employ a weighted lottery or other effective recruitment tools to ensure educationally disadvantaged students are well represented, page 31.

Program innovation will be encouraged through technical assistance and priority points for exceptionally strong plans for specific innovations designed to support educationally disadvantaged students, page 35.

The applicant indicates that monitoring to ensure compliance with Federal and State laws is addressed under state law and is referenced on page 35. Technical assistance will be provided as needed based on requests, providing ongoing support for charter schools.

Monitoring of the Lottery and Enrollment Policies is also addressed with the purpose of ensuring the use of the policy remains compliant with federal and state requirements which directly impacts access for educationally disadvantaged students, page 35.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not elaborate on specific innovation models, supports, or structures designed to improve academic achievement for educationally disadvantaged students. More specificity would add clarity to the application as the applicant ensures these elements are included in the sub-grant proposals.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Vision for Growth and Accountability

1. The Secretary determines the quality of the statewide vision, including the role of the SEA, for charter school growth and accountability. In determining the quality of the statewide vision, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The quality of the SEA' s systems for collecting, analyzing, and publicly reporting data on charter school performance, including data on student academic achievement, attainment (including high school graduation rates and college and other postsecondary education enrollment rates), retention, and discipline for all students and disaggregated by student subgroup;

2) The ambitiousness, quality of vision, and feasibility of the SEA' s plan (including key actions) to support the creation of high-quality charter schools during the project period, including a reasonable estimate of the number of high-quality charter schools in the State at both the beginning and the end of the project period; and

3) The ambitiousness, quality of vision, and feasibility of the SEA' s plan (including key actions) to support the closure of academically poor-performing charter schools in the State (i.e., through

revocation, non-renewal, or voluntary termination of a charter) during the project period.

Note: In the context of closing academically poor-performing charter schools, we remind applicants of the importance of ensuring adherence to applicable laws, policies, and procedures that govern the closure of a charter school, the disposition of its assets, and the transfer of its students and student records.

Strengths:

CDE will partner with the Director of Research and Strategy at the League, CDE Accountability Office, and other external evaluators which will contribute to achieving additional growth in both the charter school numbers and charter school performance outcomes. A broad array of demographic and performance data will be critical to accountability as described on page 36.

Triennial reports, as required by law, will be posted publicly, thus providing transparency regarding charter school performance data.

Access to data will be further available through the Schoolview Data Lab which allows anyone to pull achievement and growth data from all schools, including charter schools and disaggregated across a wide range of variables as delineated on page 36.

Because charter school growth is outpacing statewide enrollment growth, the applicant intends to support the creation of high quality charter schools during the project period, which is proactive considering the projected enrollment growth. Table 3.e.2b on page 37 includes the number of charter schools opened, closed, operating, PK-12 enrollment and percentage of enrollment statewide. Data provided in the table clearly indicate exponential growth from 2015-16 through 2018-19.

Table 3.e.2c further indicates the targeted number of new CSP sub-grant awards over the requested 3 years of the funding cycle, with projections at both the beginning and end of the project period. These numbers are ambitious, yet feasible based on the enrollment growth projections.

The SEA has an ambitious plan to support closure of academically poor performing charter schools and this plan is a part of Colorado's accountability system and supported by state law.

To further demonstrate the SEA's commitment, 47 poor-performing charter schools closed over the past 20 years. Guidance is provided by the CDE to support closure through a "Sample Closure Framework" resource which takes into consideration the far reaching impact of school closure, including impact on students, page 39.

Weaknesses:

The only area that is not specifically included, but is critical data analysis regarding college and career readiness, is high school graduation rates and postsecondary education enrollment rates.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Dissemination of Information and Best Practices

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the SEA's plan to disseminate information about charter schools and best or promising practices of successful charter schools to each LEA in the State as well as to charter schools, other public schools, and charter school developers (20 U.S.C. 7221b(b)(2)(C) and 7221(c)(f)(6)). If an SEA proposes to use a portion of its grant funds for dissemination subgrants under**

section 5204(f)(6)(B) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 7221c(f)(6)(B)), the SEA should incorporate these subgrants into the overall plan for dissemination. In determining the quality of the SEA's plan to disseminate information about charter schools and best or promising practices of successful charter schools, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- 1) The extent to which the SEA will serve as a leader in the State for identifying and disseminating information and research (which may include, but is not limited to, providing technical assistance) about best or promising practices in successful charter schools, including how the SEA will use measures of efficacy and data in identifying such practices and assessing the impact of its dissemination activities;
- 2) The quality of the SEA's plan for disseminating information and research on best or promising practices used by, and the benefits of, charter schools that effectively incorporate student body diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity and diversity with respect to educationally disadvantaged students, consistent with applicable law;
- 3) The quality of the SEA's plan for disseminating information and research on best or promising practices in charter schools related to student discipline and school climate; and
- 4) For an SEA that proposes to use a portion of its grant funds to award dissemination subgrants under section 5204(f)(6)(B) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 7221a(f)(6)(B)), the quality of the subgrant award process and the likelihood that such dissemination activities will increase the number of high-quality charter schools in the State and contribute to improved student academic achievement.

Strengths:

The applicant clearly delineates how the SEA will serve as a leader in the State for identifying and disseminating best practices. The Center for Best Practices (CBP) is a good example of this commitment and is described on page 39. The concept of CBP is innovative because it will showcase promising practices for teaching educationally disadvantaged students and at-risk students who are some of the most challenging learners.

A major strength of the CBP is the potential engagement of educators in organizing and distributing information to be shared. Recipients of the knowledge will understand how best to disseminate it.

Research and evidence-based educational programming will also be available from the Standard for Continuous School Improvement and the Charter School Bootcamp, page 41

The SEA's plan for disseminating information and research on best or promising practices, including those for educationally disadvantaged students, diverse student bodies are specific and well-designed based on the products that will be developed and shared through the Center for Best Practices as described on page 39.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not indicate how they will use measures and data to identify best practices and how they will assess the impact of the dissemination activities.

Though the dissemination plan will be inclusive of best practices for all student populations, including diverse student bodies, student discipline and school climate are not specifically addressed.

Reader's Score: 6

Selection Criteria - Oversight of Public Chartering Agencies

The Secretary considers the quality of the SEA's plan (including any use of grant administrative or other funds) to monitor, evaluate, assist, and hold accountable authorized public chartering agencies. In determining the quality of the SEA's plan to provide oversight to authorized public chartering agencies,

the Secretary considers how well the SEA' s plan will ensure that authorized public chartering agencies are --

- 1) Seeking and approving charter school petitions from developers that have the capacity to create charter schools that can become high-quality charter schools;
- 2) Approving charter school petitions with design elements that incorporate evidence-based school models and practices, including, but not limited to, school models and practices that focus on racial and ethnic diversity in student bodies and diversity in student bodies with respect to educationally disadvantaged students, consistent with applicable law;
- 3) Establishing measureable academic and operational performance expectations for all charter schools (including alternative charter schools, virtual charter schools, and charter schools that include pre-kindergarten, if such schools exist in the State) that are consistent with the definition of high-quality charter school as defined in this notice;
- 4) Monitoring their charter schools on at least an annual basis, including conducting an in-depth review of each charter school at least once every five years, to ensure that charter schools are meeting the terms of their charter or performance contracts and complying with applicable State and Federal laws;
- 5) Using increases in student academic achievement as one of the most important factors in renewal decisions; basing renewal decisions on a comprehensive set of criteria, which are set forth in the charter or performance contract; and revoking, not renewing, or encouraging the voluntary termination of charters held by academically poor-performing charter schools;
- 6) Providing, on an annual basis, public reports on the performance of their portfolios of charter schools, including the performance of each individual charter school with respect to meeting the terms of, and expectations set forth in, the school 's charter or performance contract;
- 7) Supporting charter school autonomy while holding charter schools accountable for results and meeting the terms of their charters or performance contracts; and
- 8) Ensuring the continued accountability of charter schools during any transition to new State assessments or accountability systems, including those based on college- and career-ready standards.

Strengths:

The applicant will hold authorizers accountable for their authorizing work, while they will also provide technical assistance upon request, page 41.

The applicant will allocate CPS funds to provide sustained technical assistance to current and prospective authorizers interested in acquiring skills and knowledge related to charter schools, page 41. An example of how the technical assistance will be provided includes development of a series of training modules.

The applicant describes how they will seek and approve charter school petitions from high quality planning teams and will seek support from The League's New School Development team as part of technical assistance to be provided. Collaboration with those who have experience and expertise in developing high performing charter schools contributes to promising practices in successful charter schools, page 40.

The CDE recognizes that the most established charters have an application window that provides an opportunity for post-authorization and school design time, page 41. Providing a template for the charter application structure will provide adequate time for design elements to be addressed in the charter school petition, and strengthens this component.

The applicant will establish measurable academic and operational performance expectations as included in the state's accountability system and a reference is provided on page 41. Charter schools have the flexibility to go beyond the law and add additional measures that may more accurately measure academic and operational performance for their specific population, mission, and unique education programming. The opportunity to add measures unique to the school's delivery model is a major strength because it accommodates innovation and creativity which is sometimes difficult to measure using traditional methods of evaluation.

The CDE will require the authorizer to monitor charters schools on at least an annual basis as referenced on page 41 with the specific state legislation cited.

CDE will require authorizers to assess increases in student academic achievement as one of the most important factors in renewal decision and revoking or encouraging voluntary termination of charters held by academically poor-performing charter schools and is addressed on page 41 through citation of state regulations.

CDE will require authorizers to provide annual public reports on the performance of each individual charter school's performance contract as described in Absolute Priority 1 and cited with legal reference on page 41.

CDE will support charter school autonomy while holding them accountable for results as referenced on page 41 and the standard citation is provided.

CDE will ensure continued accountability, through authorizers, of charter schools during transition to more robust learning standards and accountability system and this will be done through provision of technical assistance. Specifically during the transition to the state's new standards, the authorizers will be provided the technical assistance needed to utilize interim assessment data and other measures to make good decision on accreditation ratings of schools.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not specifically address design elements that focus on racial and ethnic diversity in schools with respect to educationally disadvantages students.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Management Plan and Theory of Action

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and the project 's theory of action. In determining the quality of the management plan and the project s theory of action, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The quality, including the cohesiveness and strength of reasoning, of the logic model (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) and the extent to which it addresses the role of the grant in promoting the State-level strategy for using charter schools to improve educational outcomes for students through CSP subgrants for planning, program design, and initial implementation; optional dissemination subgrants; optional revolving loan funds; and other strategies;

2) The extent to which the SEA' s project-specific performance measures, including any measures required by the Department, support the logic model; and

3) The adequacy of the management plan to --

i. Achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including the existence of clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks; and

ii. Address any compliance issues or findings related to the CSP that are identified in an audit or other monitoring review.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to propose a comprehensive management plan and theory of action for assessing the achievement of the objectives, including developing performance measures and performance targets for its proposed grant project that are consistent with those objectives. The applicant should clearly identify the project-specific performance measures and performance targets in its plan and should review the logic model application requirement and performance measures section of this notice for information on the requirements for developing those performance measures and performance targets consistent with the objectives of the proposed project. The applicant may choose to include a discussion of the project-specific performance measures and targets it develops in response to the logic model requirement when addressing this criterion.

Strengths:

The logic model figure on pages 43 and 44 is well developed and is cohesive to the extent that it promotes the State-level strategy for using charter schools to improve educational outcomes for student through planning and implementation of CSP sub-grants. The logic model is comprehensive and includes Inputs, Processes, Outputs, Outcomes Results and Impact.

Critical activities specifically align with the management plan and bring further cohesiveness to the applicant's vision and the project's theory of action.

The CDE's project-specific performance measures are outlined in detail in Table 3.h.2, page 45. The performance measures clearly support the logic model and include the designation of output, outcomes, or GPRA focused.

The management plan is well developed and critical to achievement of the proposed project goals and objectives. The management plan has significant detail which supports achievement of the project activities on time and within budget based on the information provided in the tables on page 47-51.

Each activity is clearly delineated with the responsible party, timeline, and measure of impact or success.

The budget narrative further supports the management plan and how it will be implemented within budget.

A summary of the WestEd findings after a CSP monitoring visit in 2013 is provided on page 52. Each of the findings is specifically addressed by CDE. Responses are reasonable and include tighter fiscal controls, disaggregated test data, dissemination of best and promising practices through the Center for Best Practice and timely transfer of student records.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Project Design

The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the SEA 's charter school subgrant program, including the extent to which the project design furthers the SEA' s overall strategy for increasing the number of high-quality charter schools in the State and improving student academic achievement. In determining the quality of the project design, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The quality of the SEA' s process for awarding subgrants for planning, program design, and initial implementation and, if applicable, for dissemination, including:

i. The subgrant application and peer review process, timelines for these processes, and how the SEA intends to ensure that subgrants will be awarded to eligible applicants demonstrating the capacity to create high-quality charter schools; and

ii. A reasonable year-by-year estimate, with supporting evidence, of

a) the number of subgrants the SEA expects to award during the project period and the average size of those subgrants, including an explanation of any assumptions upon which the estimates are based; and

b) if the SEA has previously received a CSP grant, the percentage of eligible applicants that were awarded subgrants and how this percentage related to the overall quality of the applicant pool;

2) The process for monitoring CSP subgrantees;

3) How the SEA will create a portfolio of subgrantees that focuses on areas of need within the State, such as increasing student body diversity or maintaining a high level of student body diversity, and how this focus aligns with the State-Level Strategy;

4) The steps the SEA will take to inform teachers, parents, and communities of the SEA' s charter school subgrant program; and

5) A description of any requested waivers of statutory or regulatory provisions over which the Secretary exercises administrative authority and the extent to which those waivers will, if granted, further the objectives of the project.

Strengths:

The quality of the sub-grants for planning, program design, and initial implementation is clearly described and includes the application and peer review process, timelines, and verification of eligibility. One major strength of the competition process is the provision of training, technical assistance and the well-developed RFP in Appendix E.3. The inclusion of an application checklist is exceptionally helpful for first time sub-grant applicants.

The applicant includes the timeline of sub-grant activities in the management plan on page 47 at the beginning of Table 3. h.3i. The timeline is well developed and provides a complete visual of the process from planning to approval of required application revisions.

The applicant intends to fund a total of 57 new 2 to 3 year sub-grants based on total awards and based on level of quality. An outline is provided to visualize the type of award, planning year allocation, year 1 and year 2 implementation, along with total funds to be awarded.

The process for monitoring CSP sub-grantees in addressed on page 55 and includes three main areas of sub-grantee monitoring. These areas include Risk Assessments, Fiscal Monitoring, and Programmatic Monitoring. Much detail had gone into the monitoring process and an extensive list of areas falling under Fiscal Management on page 56 and Appendix E.3. Tools such as the risk assessment protocols, the fiscal risk identification tool, and the site visit protocols will be extremely useful to sub-grantees as they prepare for the monitoring phase of the process.

The applicant's portfolio of sub-grantees that focus on specific areas of need will receive twenty priority points added to the Selection Criteria and Evaluation Rubric. These additional points will add a major incentive for sub-grantees who seek to increase student body diversity or maintain a high level of student body diversity.

The applicant will also add base points to support PWR and educationally disadvantaged students with full explanation of this new component of the sub-grant RFP.

Based on information provided in State Level Strategy Section, there is clear alignment.

Notification and communication steps to be used to inform all stakeholders is described and provided on page 57 and 58 and includes monthly notifications that might include the CDE Charter School Listserv, dissemination of Factsheets, newsletters among other types of traditional communication outlets.

Renewal of two existing waivers will be requested and include CDE's Weighted Lottery Policy for Educationally Disadvantaged students and One-Time, Significant Expansion. Both waivers will positively benefit the CCSP project objectives related to recruiting and serving more educationally disadvantaged students and expanding in order to serve more students in high quality charter schools by increasing capacity.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not indicate the percentage of eligible applicants that were awarded sub-grants and how this percentage related to the overall quality of the applicant pool.

Reader's Score: 8

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - High-Quality Authorizing and Monitoring Processes

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1: High-Quality Authorizing and Monitoring Processes

To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that all authorized public chartering agencies in the State use one or more of the following:

a) Frameworks and processes to evaluate the performance of charter schools on a regular basis that include--

1) Rigorous academic and operational performance expectations (including performance expectations related to financial management and equitable treatment of all students and applicants);

2) Performance objectives for each school aligned to those expectations;

3) Clear criteria for renewing the charter of a school based on an objective body of evidence, including evidence that the charter school has (a) met the performance objectives outlined in the charter or performance contract; (b) demonstrated organizational and fiscal viability; and (c) demonstrated fidelity to the terms of the charter or performance contract and applicable law;

4) Clear criteria for revoking the charter of a school if there is violation of law or public trust regarding student safety or public funds, or evidence of poor student academic achievement; and

5) Annual reporting by authorized public chartering agencies to each of their authorized charter schools that summarizes the individual school's performance and compliance, based on this framework, and identifies any areas that need improvement.

b) Clear and specific standards and formalized processes that measure and benchmark the performance of the authorized public chartering agency or agencies, including the performance of its portfolio of charter schools, and provide for the annual dissemination of information on such performance;

c) Authorizing processes that establish clear criteria for evaluating charter applications and include a multi-tiered clearance or review of a charter school, including a final review immediately before the school opens for its first operational year; or

d) Authorizing processes that include differentiated review of charter petitions to assess whether, and the extent to which, the charter school developer has been successful (as determined by the authorized public chartering agency) in establishing and operating one or more high-quality charter schools.

Strengths:

The frameworks and processes to evaluate the performance of charter schools on a regular basis include rigorous academic and operation performance expectations that are addressed in Colorado's Charter School Act (page 6) and a charter school's contract. The contract covers performance evaluation across many dimensions, including academic, operational, financial, and non-discrimination performance expectations.

Performance objectives for each school is determined through an aggregate District Performance Framework (DPF), which benchmarks progress toward meeting accountability standards. The results for individual schools is publicly posted on CDE's Schoolview website creating transparency for community stakeholders, page 7. Another major strength of the process is the ability to generate a charter portfolio performance framework (CPF) report for each charter authorizer to determine authorizer risks and provide technical assistance where needed and contribute to authorizer accountability.

Clear criteria for renewing and revoking the charter is addressed in the state statute and referenced on page 7, as based on meeting and making adequate progress toward achievement of goals, objectives, content standards, pupil performance standards and other requirements included in the charter contract.

Annual reporting requirements are met through the annual District Performance Framework described on page 7 and include a summary of the school's performance and compliance with statutes and charter contracts. The reports must also include areas for improvement or corrective action. Reports are made publicly available which provides a high level of transparency.

The application includes a clear description of the authorizing process with clear criteria for evaluating the application. A description on page 8 includes the review processes, timelines, and evaluation criteria. Specific components required by law are also outlined.

The applicant will include a differentiated review of charter petitions to assess the extent to which the developer has been successfully establishing and operating one or more high quality charter schools. Though the Statute does not require a differentiated process for replicating charter operators, authorizers have streamlined application process for high performing charter schools as noted on page 9 of the application.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 15

Competitive Preference Priority - Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: One Authorized Public Chartering Agency Other than a LEA, or an Appeals Process

To meet this priority, the applicant must demonstrate that 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 LEAs are the only authorized public chartering agencies, allows for an appeals process for the denial of an application for a charter school.

Note: In order to meet this priority under paragraph (b) above, the entity hearing appeal must have the authority to approve the charter application over the objections of the LEA.

Strengths:

Colorado's state statute includes a strong appeals process and has the authority to remand decisions that are not in the best interest of students. The appeal process is clearly described on page 10 and further in the state statute cited.

The statewide Charter School Institute (CSI) was established in 2004 to provide an alternative mode of authorizing charter

schools among other tasks as described on page 10.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/31/2015 02:18 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/31/2015 01:19 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Colorado Department of Education (U282A150018)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
State-Level Strategy		
1. State-Level Strategy	15	15
Sub Total	15	15
Selection Criteria		
Policy Context for Charter Schools		
1. Policy Context	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Selection Criteria		
Past Performance		
1. Past Performance	10	9
Quality of Plan to Support Ed. Dis. Students		
1. Ed. Dis. Students	15	15
Vision for Growth and Accountability		
1. Growth and Accountability	10	8
Dissemination of Information and Best Practices		
1. Dissemination	10	6
Oversight of Public Chartering Agencies		
1. Oversight of Authorizers	15	13
Management Plan and Theory of Action		
1. Management Plan	10	10
Project Design		
1. Project Design	10	10
Sub Total	80	71
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
High-Quality Authorizing and Monitoring Processes		
1. CPP 1	15	12
Sub Total	15	12
Competitive Preference Priority		
Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process		

1. CPP 2

	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Total	120	108

Technical Review Form

Panel #19 - SEA Panel - 20: 84.282A

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Colorado Department of Education (U282A150018)

Questions

Selection Criteria - State-Level Strategy

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the State-level strategy for using charter schools to improve educational outcomes for students throughout the State. In determining the quality of the State-level strategy, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The extent to which the SEA 's CSP activities, including the subgrant program, are integrated into the State s overall strategy for improving student academic achievement and attainment (including high school graduation rates and college and other postsecondary education enrollment rates) and closing achievement and attainment gaps, and complement or leverage other statewide education reform efforts;

2) The extent to which funding equity for charter schools (including equitable funding for charter school facilities) is incorporated into the SEA' s State-level strategy; and

3) The extent to which the State encourages local strategies for improving student academic achievement and attainment that involve charter schools, including but not limited to the following:

i. Collaboration, including the sharing of data and promising instructional and other practices, between charter schools and other public schools or providers of early learning and development programs or alternative education programs; and

ii. The creation of charter schools that would serve as viable options for students who currently attend, or would otherwise attend, the State 's lowest-performing schools.

Strengths:

The SEA reports that it has a strategic initiative to increase the number of new high quality charter schools. They indicate the SEA will use the subgrant competition for startup costs for planning and implementation. The SEA indicates that as part of the grant program, it provides grant related technical assistance.

The SEA also describes a second strategic priority that describes building and growing capacity of authorizers. The SEA describes in detail how it will provide supports by hosting quarterly meetings, sharing resources and be a part of an authorizer summit.

The SEA has indicated that it has partnered with the League to offer a board fundamentals course. The SEA has also indicated that it will provide several topical technical assistance webinars. The SEA has also partnered with the League of charter schools to offer administrator mentoring in the form of 6 day long events. They also indicate that they provide finance training and a charter school boot camp.

The SEA also describes its research and performance and evaluations. The SEA indicated that it will dedicate 10% of its case study research to successful charter practices.

The SEA indicates that funding equity is established in its state. Charters are entitled to rent-free facilities in district space. The SEA has also created a charter school capitol construction fund to help offset the finance, lease or purchase of facilities.

The SEA indicates that schools are encouraged to use their data to identify areas for improvement. The SEA indicates on

page 19 that it will describe best practices for traditional and charter schools on its website. The SEA also indicated that the state board can require the conversion of a school to a charter.

The SEA also indicates on page 22 that it encourages the use of weighted lotteries to ensure that charter schools are serving increasing number of educationally disadvantaged students, which helps to ensure that those students would otherwise attend the state's lowest performing schools have an increased opportunity to attend a high quality charter school.

Weaknesses:

None identified

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Policy Context for Charter Schools

1. The Secretary considers the policy context for charter schools under the proposed project. In determining the policy context for charter schools under the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The degree of flexibility afforded to charter schools under the State's charter school law, including:

i. The extent to which charter schools in the State are exempt from State or local rules that inhibit the flexible operation and management of public schools; and

ii. The extent to which charter schools in the State have a high degree of autonomy, including autonomy over the charter school's budget, expenditures, staffing, procurement, and curriculum;

2) The quality of the SEA's processes for:

i. Annually informing each charter school in the State about Federal funds the charter school is eligible to receive and Federal programs in which the charter school may participate; and

ii. Annually ensuring that each charter school in the State receives, in a timely fashion, the school's commensurate share of Federal funds that are allocated by formula each year, particularly during the first year of operation of the school and during a year in which the school's enrollment expands significantly; and

3) The quality of the SEA's plan to ensure that charter schools that are considered to be LEAs under State law and LEAs in which charter schools are located will comply with sections 613(a)(5) and 613(e)(1)(B) of IDEA (20 U.S.C. 1400, et seq.), the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (42 U.S.C. 6101, et seq.), title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d, et seq.), title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. 1681, et seq.), and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794).

Strengths:

The SEA reports that charter schools have a high degree of autonomy. Charter schools can also apply for an automatic waiver of requirements surrounding use of time, school calendar, school day length, hiring practices, evaluations, compensation, curriculum and extra curricular activities. These waivers are reported on page 22 and in appendix E.

The SEA reports that it provides charter schools with a year at a glance training and information. This will allow the charter school to identify each of the funding opportunities and deadlines to ensure that the charter schools are aware. The SEA in its ConApp, it reminds the LEAs that they are responsible for notifying their charter schools about federal funding opportunities. The SEA also hosts ConApp training and includes charter schools to remind the schools about the funding, but also remind the authorizer of their responsibilities.

The SEA clearly describes that the subgrantees are monitored for compliance and the SEA reports that questions of non-

compliance are investigated and addressed through corrective action including suspension or termination of federal funding.

The SEA also describes that authorizers monitor the schools they have authorized for compliance with state and federal laws as well as the terms of their charter contract. The authorizers are required to report annually to the SEA and each of the charter schools regarding the school's performance and compliance and identify any areas for improvement or corrective action.

Weaknesses:

None noted

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Past Performance

1. The Secretary considers the past performance of charter schools in a State that enacted a charter school law for the first time five or more years before submission of its application. In determining the past performance of charter schools in such a State, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The extent to which there has been a demonstrated increase, for each of the past five years, in the number and percentage of high-quality charter schools (as defined in this notice) in the State;

2) The extent to which there has been a demonstrated reduction, for each of the past five years, in the number and percentage of academically poor-performing charter schools (as defined in this notice) in the State; and

3) Whether, and the extent to which, the academic achievement and academic attainment (including high school graduation rates and college and other postsecondary education enrollment rates) of charter school students equal or exceed the academic achievement and academic attainment of similar students in other public schools in the State over the past five years.

Strengths:

The number of high quality charter schools has increased over time and the rate has remained relatively constant over the last 5 years around 77% of all charter schools are considered high performing and the absolute number of high quality schools has risen from 124 to 156 over the last 5 years.

The number and percentage of charters that are poor performing is reported by the SEA. After a spike from 2010-12, the numbers and percent of these schools has been reduced. According to the SEA, of those 20 schools, 5 closed, 10 improved and 5 may face closure.

The SEA reports that for the 4th year in a row, charters have outperformed traditional schools in reading and math in 4th and 8th grade. Further on its growth model measures, the charter schools are outperforming similar demographic groups. On page 28, the SEA reports data that shows the charters have outperformed traditional schools on the median growth percentile for each year in the last 5 years.

The SEA has recognized that the graduation rates and postsecondary enrollment rates are lower for charter schools and on page 30 indicated that it will continue to research into these rates.

Weaknesses:

The SEA reports that there was an increase in the number and percent of poor performing charters from 2010-2012.

On page 28, the SEA reports that charter grad rates for most of the last 5 years have been lower than traditional schools. Postsecondary enrollment rates have also been lower for charter schools.

Selection Criteria - Quality of Plan to Support Ed. Dis. Students

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the SEA 's plan to support educationally disadvantaged students. In determining the quality of the plan to support educationally disadvantaged students, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The extent to which the SEA' s charter school subgrant program would--

i. Assist students, particularly educationally disadvantaged students, in meeting and exceeding State academic content standards and State student achievement standards; and

ii. Reduce or eliminate achievement gaps for educationally disadvantaged students;

2) The quality of the SEA 's plan to ensure that charter schools attract, recruit, admit, enroll, serve, and retain educationally disadvantaged students equitably, meaningfully, and, with regard to educationally disadvantaged students who are students with disabilities or English learners, in a manner consistent with, as appropriate, the IDEA (regarding students with disabilities) and civil rights laws, in particular, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;

3) The extent to which the SEA will encourage innovations in charter schools, such as models, policies, supports, or structures, that are designed to improve the academic achievement of educationally disadvantaged students; and

4) The quality of the SEA 's plan for monitoring all charter schools to ensure compliance with Federal and State laws, particularly laws related to educational equity, nondiscrimination, and access to public schools for educationally disadvantaged students.

Strengths:

The SEA reports that it focuses primarily on assisting students in achieving the academic performance standards and has targeted educationally disadvantaged students. This is a key selection criteria in their subgrant.

The SEA also reports that it does extensive technical assistance to ensure subgrantees provide the best possible outcomes.

On the data reported on page 32, the charter schools outperform traditional schools for each of the subgroups.

The SEA reports that it shows an overall positive trajectory in enrollment. The SEA reports that it has used a weighted lottery approach, which it believes has had a positive effect on closing the gaps between charter and traditional schools for the underrepresented subgroups. The gap has closed from 15% in 2010 to 10% in 2014, thus indicating that the SEA's approach towards encouraging a weighted lottery has reduced the enrollment gap by 50% in 5 years.

The subgrant application requires that the charter school articulate and justify how their school model and policies will positively affect the academic outcomes of disadvantaged students.

The SEA reports that it monitors schools effectively and has employed an external evaluation from WestEd to confirm these findings.

Weaknesses:

None noted

Selection Criteria - Vision for Growth and Accountability

1. The Secretary determines the quality of the statewide vision, including the role of the SEA, for charter school growth and accountability. In determining the quality of the statewide vision, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The quality of the SEA's systems for collecting, analyzing, and publicly reporting data on charter school performance, including data on student academic achievement, attainment (including high school graduation rates and college and other postsecondary education enrollment rates), retention, and discipline for all students and disaggregated by student subgroup;

2) The ambitiousness, quality of vision, and feasibility of the SEA's plan (including key actions) to support the creation of high-quality charter schools during the project period, including a reasonable estimate of the number of high-quality charter schools in the State at both the beginning and the end of the project period; and

3) The ambitiousness, quality of vision, and feasibility of the SEA's plan (including key actions) to support the closure of academically poor-performing charter schools in the State (i.e., through revocation, non-renewal, or voluntary termination of a charter) during the project period.

Note: In the context of closing academically poor-performing charter schools, we remind applicants of the importance of ensuring adherence to applicable laws, policies, and procedures that govern the closure of a charter school, the disposition of its assets, and the transfer of its students and student records.

Strengths:

The SEA reports that it is committed to achieving additional growth in both charter school numbers and performance. The SEA does commit to adding new schools. The SEA reports on its goals for growth that show new charters opening each year of the grant cycle. The SEA reports that it will publish data on its website, including information on student achievement, and growth, growth gaps, graduation rates, drop out rates, retention rates, student discipline incidences, educator performance and compensation. This report allows a user to pull down data and aggregate it. They also report on page 36 that they will be partnering with their research department to ensure evaluations. They reported that 47 poor performing charter schools closed over the past 20 years. The accountability system includes the closure of schools as a component of its evaluation system.

Weaknesses:

The results do not seem that ambitious. The SEA reports that they received 35 applicants in 14-15 for the CSP grant, yet they only propose that 14 schools will open.

In previous sections, the SEA reported that there were 5 schools that were potentially going to be closed due to low performance, however, they only list 1 in 15-16 and 16-17 to close. The SEA could be more ambitious in its efforts to close the low performing schools.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Dissemination of Information and Best Practices

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the SEA's plan to disseminate information about charter schools and best or promising practices of successful charter schools to each LEA in the State as well as to charter schools, other public schools, and charter school developers (20 U.S.C. 7221b(b)(2)(C) and 7221(c)(f)(6)). If an SEA proposes to use a portion of its grant funds for dissemination subgrants under section 5204(f)(6)(B) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 7221c(f)(6)(B)), the SEA should incorporate these subgrants into the overall plan for dissemination. In determining the quality of the SEA's plan to disseminate

information about charter schools and best or promising practices of successful charter schools, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- 1) The extent to which the SEA will serve as a leader in the State for identifying and disseminating information and research (which may include, but is not limited to, providing technical assistance) about best or promising practices in successful charter schools, including how the SEA will use measures of efficacy and data in identifying such practices and assessing the impact of its dissemination activities;
- 2) The quality of the SEA's plan for disseminating information and research on best or promising practices used by, and the benefits of, charter schools that effectively incorporate student body diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity and diversity with respect to educationally disadvantaged students, consistent with applicable law;
- 3) The quality of the SEA's plan for disseminating information and research on best or promising practices in charter schools related to student discipline and school climate; and
- 4) For an SEA that proposes to use a portion of its grant funds to award dissemination subgrants under section 5204(f)(6)(B) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 7221a(f)(6)(B)), the quality of the subgrant award process and the likelihood that such dissemination activities will increase the number of high-quality charter schools in the State and contribute to improved student academic achievement.

Strengths:

The SEA reports that it has recently launched its center for best practice to communicate promising practices in schools. It will publish case studies, including 10% reserved for charter schools. This is an innovative approach and is a strength.

Weaknesses:

The SEA does not include a thorough description of how it will measure the efficacy of its dissemination activities.

The SEA does not describe how it plans to disseminate information particularly focused on student discipline, student diversity or school climate. It mentions that these might be part of the case studies, but there are no indications of how it intends to make certain these are part of the dissemination practices.

The CBP was only focused on 10% of charter schools, although the SEA identifies that the charter population is the most innovative and should be focused at a greater proportion of charter schools.

Reader's Score: 6

Selection Criteria - Oversight of Public Chartering Agencies

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the SEA's plan (including any use of grant administrative or other funds) to monitor, evaluate, assist, and hold accountable authorized public chartering agencies. In determining the quality of the SEA's plan to provide oversight to authorized public chartering agencies, the Secretary considers how well the SEA's plan will ensure that authorized public chartering agencies are --

- 1) Seeking and approving charter school petitions from developers that have the capacity to create charter schools that can become high-quality charter schools;
- 2) Approving charter school petitions with design elements that incorporate evidence-based school models and practices, including, but not limited to, school models and practices that focus on racial and ethnic diversity in student bodies and diversity in student bodies with respect to educationally disadvantaged students, consistent with applicable law;
- 3) Establishing measureable academic and operational performance expectations for all charter schools (including alternative charter schools, virtual charter schools, and charter schools that include pre-

kindergarten, if such schools exist in the State) that are consistent with the definition of high-quality charter school as defined in this notice;

4) Monitoring their charter schools on at least an annual basis, including conducting an in-depth review of each charter school at least once every five years, to ensure that charter schools are meeting the terms of their charter or performance contracts and complying with applicable State and Federal laws;

5) Using increases in student academic achievement as one of the most important factors in renewal decisions; basing renewal decisions on a comprehensive set of criteria, which are set forth in the charter or performance contract; and revoking, not renewing, or encouraging the voluntary termination of charters held by academically poor-performing charter schools;

6) Providing, on an annual basis, public reports on the performance of their portfolios of charter schools, including the performance of each individual charter school with respect to meeting the terms of, and expectations set forth in, the school 's charter or performance contract;

7) Supporting charter school autonomy while holding charter schools accountable for results and meeting the terms of their charters or performance contracts; and

8) Ensuring the continued accountability of charter schools during any transition to new State assessments or accountability systems, including those based on college- and career-ready standards.

Strengths:

When new planning teams are identified, the SEA in partnership with the Colorado League of Charter Schools reach out to authorizers to begin the communication.

The SEA has developed and published a standard application for which developers can use when putting together a school petition.

The SEA describes the ways that it can monitor and how it establishes measurable pupil objectives. The schools set their own targets for operational as well as academics.

The SEA reports that districts have been provided technical assistance on how to evaluate charter schools during the transition to new standards.

The SEA reports on page 7 that authorizers portfolios of schools are annually reported as part of the District Performance Framework.

Weaknesses:

Although the SEA reacts when it hears of development teams, it does not articulate a plan to ensure that the authorizers are seeking petitions from high quality developers.

It is unclear from this section how the SEA will ensure that these petitions focus on diversity and serving educationally disadvantaged students.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Management Plan and Theory of Action

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and the project 's theory of action. In determining the quality of the management plan and the project s theory of action, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The quality, including the cohesiveness and strength of reasoning, of the logic model (as defined in

34 CFR 77.1(c)) and the extent to which it addresses the role of the grant in promoting the State-level strategy for using charter schools to improve educational outcomes for students through CSP subgrants for planning, program design, and initial implementation; optional dissemination subgrants; optional revolving loan funds; and other strategies;

2) The extent to which the SEA's project-specific performance measures, including any measures required by the Department, support the logic model; and

3) The adequacy of the management plan to --

i. Achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including the existence of clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks; and

ii. Address any compliance issues or findings related to the CSP that are identified in an audit or other monitoring review.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to propose a comprehensive management plan and theory of action for assessing the achievement of the objectives, including developing performance measures and performance targets for its proposed grant project that are consistent with those objectives. The applicant should clearly identify the project-specific performance measures and performance targets in its plan and should review the logic model application requirement and performance measures section of this notice for information on the requirements for developing those performance measures and performance targets consistent with the objectives of the proposed project. The applicant may choose to include a discussion of the project-specific performance measures and targets it develops in response to the logic model requirement when addressing this criterion.

Strengths:

The logic model is thorough and presents an approach that seems to implement the state level strategy in an efficient and effective way. It lists the critical activities, the desired outputs and performance measures.

The performance measures include baseline data and performance targets that support the logic model. It also includes a good description of the specific performance measures that will be used as well as how to calculate them.

The management plan includes a series of activities tied directly to the timeline and measure of impact. This allows each activity to be tied back to a grant priority and be assigned to someone at the SEA.

The SEA thoroughly described some of its efforts to address compliance issues or findings.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the SEA's charter school subgrant program, including the extent to which the project design furthers the SEA's overall strategy for increasing the number of high-quality charter schools in the State and improving student academic achievement. In determining the quality of the project design, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The quality of the SEA's process for awarding subgrants for planning, program design, and initial implementation and, if applicable, for dissemination, including:

i. The subgrant application and peer review process, timelines for these processes, and how the SEA intends to ensure that subgrants will be awarded to eligible applicants demonstrating the capacity to create high-quality charter schools; and

ii. A reasonable year-by-year estimate, with supporting evidence, of

a) the number of subgrants the SEA expects to award during the project period and the average size of those subgrants, including an explanation of any assumptions upon which the estimates are based; and

b) if the SEA has previously received a CSP grant, the percentage of eligible applicants that were awarded subgrants and how this percentage related to the overall quality of the applicant pool;

2) The process for monitoring CSP subgrantees;

3) How the SEA will create a portfolio of subgrantees that focuses on areas of need within the State, such as increasing student body diversity or maintaining a high level of student body diversity, and how this focus aligns with the State-Level Strategy;

4) The steps the SEA will take to inform teachers, parents, and communities of the SEA' s charter school subgrant program; and

5) A description of any requested waivers of statutory or regulatory provisions over which the Secretary exercises administrative authority and the extent to which those waivers will, if granted, further the objectives of the project.

Strengths:

The SEA reports that it has a robust subgrant competition process.

The SEA has developed a grant RFP that serves as the framework for the subgrant competition. This document is thorough and addresses the subgrant priorities and requirements.

The subgrant competition is timed after the initial petition submission to the authorizers to ensure that the petitioners have a pending or approved charter application.

The SEA indicates that its grants are awarded typically with a planning year and two years of implementation, with the award evenly split between the three years. The SEA also reports that it will offer smaller grants for replications or small schools.

The SEA indicated that it hopes to award 57 new subgrants, which is a reasonable estimate of the number of subgrantees based on the budgeted amounts.

The SEA also describes how it will monitor subgrantees for fiscal and programmatic concerns. This monitoring approach seems thorough. The SEA indicated that it is planning to focus the subgrants to target schools serving disadvantaged populations by adding 20 additional points for those that propose to serve those students.

The SEA also described its weighted lottery approach on page 58 and Appendix E.6, which appears to be reasonable to ensure that the school serve disadvantaged students, which is a waiver request and would be a strength on the application to ensure that educationally disadvantaged students were enrolled in charters.

Weaknesses:

None noted

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - High-Quality Authorizing and Monitoring Processes

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1: High-Quality Authorizing and Monitoring Processes

To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that all authorized public chartering agencies in the State use one or more of the following:

a) Frameworks and processes to evaluate the performance of charter schools on a regular basis that include--

1) Rigorous academic and operational performance expectations (including performance expectations related to financial management and equitable treatment of all students and applicants);

2) Performance objectives for each school aligned to those expectations;

3) Clear criteria for renewing the charter of a school based on an objective body of evidence, including evidence that the charter school has (a) met the performance objectives outlined in the charter or performance contract; (b) demonstrated organizational and fiscal viability; and (c) demonstrated fidelity to the terms of the charter or performance contract and applicable law;

4) Clear criteria for revoking the charter of a school if there is violation of law or public trust regarding student safety or public funds, or evidence of poor student academic achievement; and

5) Annual reporting by authorized public chartering agencies to each of their authorized charter schools that summarizes the individual school 's performance and compliance, based on this framework, and identifies any areas that need improvement.

b) Clear and specific standards and formalized processes that measure and benchmark the performance of the authorized public chartering agency or agencies, including the performance of its portfolio of charter schools, and provide for the annual dissemination of information on such performance;

c) Authorizing processes that establish clear criteria for evaluating charter applications and include a multi-tiered clearance or review of a charter school, including a final review immediately before the school opens for its first operational year; or

d) Authorizing processes that include differentiated review of charter petitions to assess whether, and the extent to which, the charter school developer has been successful (as determined by the authorized public chartering agency) in establishing and operating one or more high-quality charter schools.

Strengths:

The SEA reports that the charter contract will serve both as the framework for authorization and the ongoing monitoring of the school. Each authorizer is expected to establish frameworks and procedures for academic, operational and financial expectations for the charter school. The SEA also reports that the statutory framework includes criteria that governs renewal and revocation decisions.

The SEA reports that it publishes District Performance Frameworks which benchmark progress towards meeting accountability goals, these reports will help to ensure that there is public reporting about authorizer performance of their portfolios.

The SEA reports that it has worked collaboratively with its authorizers and has been recognized as national leader in authorizing practices in a publication by the national alliance for public charter schools and NACSA. The SEA has also reported that it participated in a charter authorizer accountability task force with the Colorado league of schools and various stakeholders.

Weaknesses:

The SEA reports that the statute does not require a differentiated process for charter petitions from developers of high quality schools.

Although each authorizer is expected to establish performance frameworks. the SEA does not demonstrate how it is able to ensure that each authorizer has established and implemented reasonable performance frameworks.

Reader's Score: 12

Competitive Preference Priority - Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: One Authorized Public Chartering Agency Other than a LEA, or an Appeals Process

To meet this priority, the applicant must demonstrate that 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 LEAs are the only authorized public chartering agencies, allows for an appeals process for the denial of an application for a charter school.

Note: In order to meet this priority under paragraph (b) above, the entity hearing appeal must have the authority to approve the charter application over the objections of the LEA.

Strengths:

The SEA reports on page 9 that it has an appeal process that allows the state board of education to review charter school petitions on appeal.

Weaknesses:

None noted

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/31/2015 01:19 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/07/2015 11:56 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Colorado Department of Education (U282A150018)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
State-Level Strategy		
1. State-Level Strategy	15	8
Sub Total	15	8
Selection Criteria		
Policy Context for Charter Schools		
1. Policy Context	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Selection Criteria		
Past Performance		
1. Past Performance	10	6
Quality of Plan to Support Ed. Dis. Students		
1. Ed. Dis. Students	15	12
Vision for Growth and Accountability		
1. Growth and Accountability	10	7
Dissemination of Information and Best Practices		
1. Dissemination	10	5
Oversight of Public Chartering Agencies		
1. Oversight of Authorizers	15	10
Management Plan and Theory of Action		
1. Management Plan	10	9
Project Design		
1. Project Design	10	8
Sub Total	80	57
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
High-Quality Authorizing and Monitoring Processes		
1. CPP 1	15	14
Sub Total	15	14
Competitive Preference Pritority		
Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process		

1. CPP 2

	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Total	120	89

Technical Review Form

Panel #19 - SEA Panel - 20: 84.282A

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Colorado Department of Education (U282A150018)

Questions

Selection Criteria - State-Level Strategy

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the State-level strategy for using charter schools to improve educational outcomes for students throughout the State. In determining the quality of the State-level strategy, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The extent to which the SEA 's CSP activities, including the subgrant program, are integrated into the State s overall strategy for improving student academic achievement and attainment (including high school graduation rates and college and other postsecondary education enrollment rates) and closing achievement and attainment gaps, and complement or leverage other statewide education reform efforts;

2) The extent to which funding equity for charter schools (including equitable funding for charter school facilities) is incorporated into the SEA' s State-level strategy; and

3) The extent to which the State encourages local strategies for improving student academic achievement and attainment that involve charter schools, including but not limited to the following:

i. Collaboration, including the sharing of data and promising instructional and other practices, between charter schools and other public schools or providers of early learning and development programs or alternative education programs; and

ii. The creation of charter schools that would serve as viable options for students who currently attend, or would otherwise attend, the State 's lowest-performing schools.

Strengths:

P. 11-12: The applicant provides strong and comprehensive incorporation of chartering activities into the state's well-articulated overall goals.

Pp. 13-14: There are clearly defined strategic objectives with respect to the CSP grant request

P. 18: The applicant includes specific supports addressed to rural charter schools (Western Slope), including both in-person and virtual Technical Assistance.

P. 20: The applicant notes 100% equal district per-pupil revenue (and even matching online school revenue for online charters), less 5% administrative fee, and with robust provisions to ensure charter participation in LEA funding – including ability to leverage alternate authorizer as fiscal agent in circumstances where grant funding is not distributed fairly.

There is a requirement for districts to provide rent-free access to available district buildings

\$22 mil (\$255 per pupil) allocated to the Charter School Capital Construction fund, from 12% of annual marijuana excise taxes – increased funding in each year since 2012.

Charter schools can apply for (on an equitable basis with districts) an additional \$500mil in matching funds and emergency grants for major capital projects from the School Trust Lands and State Lottery revenues. p 21

There is evidence of strong partnerships with LEAs and other sector stakeholders, effectively leveraged in support of SEA' s overarching vision.

Weaknesses:

There is no information in the application materials specifically stating that charter operators receive equitable primary funding with respect to facilities/capital outside of the capital construction matching program and the BEST grants and therefore it appears that the funding is not equitable.

The applicant relies heavily on Technical Assistance and voluntary collaboration, with limited discussion of the SEA's direct role in leveraging the charter sector to improve student academic achievement and educational outcomes.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Policy Context for Charter Schools

1. The Secretary considers the policy context for charter schools under the proposed project. In determining the policy context for charter schools under the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The degree of flexibility afforded to charter schools under the State's charter school law, including:

i. The extent to which charter schools in the State are exempt from State or local rules that inhibit the flexible operation and management of public schools; and

ii. The extent to which charter schools in the State have a high degree of autonomy, including autonomy over the charter school's budget, expenditures, staffing, procurement, and curriculum;

2) The quality of the SEA's processes for:

i. Annually informing each charter school in the State about Federal funds the charter school is eligible to receive and Federal programs in which the charter school may participate; and

ii. Annually ensuring that each charter school in the State receives, in a timely fashion, the school's commensurate share of Federal funds that are allocated by formula each year, particularly during the first year of operation of the school and during a year in which the school's enrollment expands significantly; and

3) The quality of the SEA's plan to ensure that charter schools that are considered to be LEAs under State law and LEAs in which charter schools are located will comply with sections 613(a)(5) and 613(e)(1)(B) of IDEA (20 U.S.C. 1400, et seq.), the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (42 U.S.C. 6101, et seq.), title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d, et seq.), title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. 1681, et seq.), and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794).

Strengths:

The applicant noted broad waiver process, with provisions for automatic and by-request waivers for most all areas of law (excepting Federal requirements). page 23

The applicant includes meaningful and robust efforts to both directly inform charter schools about Federal funding opportunities, and to monitor individual LEA's efforts to inform and include charter schools in grant opportunities. p22,23

Colorado's Department of Education hosts annual Leadership Academy Consolidated Application trainings where LEA's are reminded of their responsibility to inform each charter about Federal funds and Federal programs and to ensure timely disbursement to charter schools.

The applicant notes multiple ways in which charter schools are informed of how to access federal funding from links to websites to a 2 Day Charter Boot Camp for newly approved charters, the Department of Education does an excellent job in this area. p 24 and 25

The CDE monitors subgrantee projects in compliance with all federal requirements

Charter schools, and their LEAs, in Colorado are required to provide evidence of annual trainings on nondiscrimination laws to employees and board members. They also must provide evidence of access and services for students with disabilities consistent with federal and state law. p25 - 26

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses in this section.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Past Performance

1. The Secretary considers the past performance of charter schools in a State that enacted a charter school law for the first time five or more years before submission of its application. In determining the past performance of charter schools in such a State, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The extent to which there has been a demonstrated increase, for each of the past five years, in the number and percentage of high-quality charter schools (as defined in this notice) in the State;

2) The extent to which there has been a demonstrated reduction, for each of the past five years, in the number and percentage of academically poor-performing charter schools (as defined in this notice) in the State; and

3) Whether, and the extent to which, the academic achievement and academic attainment (including high school graduation rates and college and other postsecondary education enrollment rates) of charter school students equal or exceed the academic achievement and academic attainment of similar students in other public schools in the State over the past five years.

Strengths:

P. 27 There is a demonstrated increase in number of high quality charter schools since 2011, and overall high percentage of high-quality charter schools. The growth is from 124 in 2010 to 156 in 2014.

The applicant notes low absolute numbers (9 to 12) of poor-performing charter schools, given size of state's charter sector.

P. 27-28: demonstrated gains (both absolute and median growth percentiles) for charter schools exceeds those for non-charters in each identified year.

Weaknesses:

P. 27 While there was overall growth from 2010-2014, there was also stagnant growth in the percentage of high-quality charter schools (77.0% in 2010 to 77.2% in 2014, with dips in each year prior to 2013). The applicant attributes the dip in scores in 2011 and 2012 due to opening 8 new charter schools focused on educationally disadvantaged students.

Increase in both number and percentage of poor-performing charter schools.

•P. 29: graduation rate performance, especially for alternative education campuses and online programs, lags behind comparable state averages.

Reader's Score: 6

Selection Criteria - Quality of Plan to Support Ed. Dis. Students

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the SEA 's plan to support educationally disadvantaged students. In determining the quality of the plan to support educationally disadvantaged students, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The extent to which the SEA' s charter school subgrant program would--

i. Assist students, particularly educationally disadvantaged students, in meeting and exceeding State academic content standards and State student achievement standards; and

ii. Reduce or eliminate achievement gaps for educationally disadvantaged students;

2) The quality of the SEA 's plan to ensure that charter schools attract, recruit, admit, enroll, serve, and retain educationally disadvantaged students equitably, meaningfully, and, with regard to educationally disadvantaged students who are students with disabilities or English learners, in a manner consistent with, as appropriate, the IDEA (regarding students with disabilities) and civil rights laws, in particular, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;

3) The extent to which the SEA will encourage innovations in charter schools, such as models, policies, supports, or structures, that are designed to improve the academic achievement of educationally disadvantaged students; and

4) The quality of the SEA 's plan for monitoring all charter schools to ensure compliance with Federal and State laws, particularly laws related to educational equity, nondiscrimination, and access to public schools for educationally disadvantaged students.

Strengths:

The applicant notes that the CSP subgrant selection criteria will be targeted to include key elements of academic instruction such as how the school will meet the needs of educationally disadvantaged students. p30

Colorado employs a weighted lottery for educationally disadvantaged students to allow CSP subgrantee charter schools to enroll and serve more educationally disadvantaged students by offering a weight for those students in the enrollment lottery. P31 The federal CSP office approved this policy in 2015.

The applicant will further incentivize charter schools to enroll higher numbers of educationally disadvantaged students by giving additional priority points under the CCSP grant selection criteria to those schools that employ a weighted lottery or effective recruitment tools for this population. P32

The applicant presents information noting that academic growth is higher for ELL and disabled students in charter schools as compared to growth rates for the same subgroups in traditional schools. p32

The weighted lottery policy is monitored and measured by CDE for all charter schools in the statewide. The results of the weighted lottery policy show a positive trajectory for the numbers of educationally disadvantaged students enrolled in charter schools. p 33

Innovation is encouraged through priority points awarded in the CSP subgrant application. p35

As noted in an earlier section of the application the CDE ensure compliance with all Federal and State regulations and laws in regard to enrollment of students with disabilities.

Weaknesses:

While the ability to weight a lottery to enroll higher numbers of educationally disadvantaged students in charter schools is helpful, the participation is voluntary. The state does not enforce charter enrollment mirroring the local district schools as it relates to percentages of students with disabilities, and those designated as ELL.

The applicant lacks specificity regarding how the priority points will be awarded to the subgrantee for innovation for

educationally disadvantaged students.

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Vision for Growth and Accountability

1. The Secretary determines the quality of the statewide vision, including the role of the SEA, for charter school growth and accountability. In determining the quality of the statewide vision, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The quality of the SEA' s systems for collecting, analyzing, and publicly reporting data on charter school performance, including data on student academic achievement, attainment (including high school graduation rates and college and other postsecondary education enrollment rates), retention, and discipline for all students and disaggregated by student subgroup;

2) The ambitiousness, quality of vision, and feasibility of the SEA' s plan (including key actions) to support the creation of high-quality charter schools during the project period, including a reasonable estimate of the number of high-quality charter schools in the State at both the beginning and the end of the project period; and

3) The ambitiousness, quality of vision, and feasibility of the SEA' s plan (including key actions) to support the closure of academically poor-performing charter schools in the State (i.e., through revocation, non-renewal, or voluntary termination of a charter) during the project period.

Note: In the context of closing academically poor-performing charter schools, we remind applicants of the importance of ensuring adherence to applicable laws, policies, and procedures that govern the closure of a charter school, the disposition of its assets, and the transfer of its students and student records.

Strengths:

The applicant notes that a broad variety of demographic and performance data is collected by CDE for charter schools ranging from student demographics to discipline to staff retention rates. P 36

The applicant notes that according to statute a triennial report on the State of Colorado Charter Schools must be developed, published online and distributed widely – the report outlines charter performance against non-charter performance.

The Schoolview Data Lab also allows the general public to pull information related to individual charter schools. p36
The applicant plans to incentivize high performing schools through a priority preference for CSP subgrants. p37
Colorado's accountability system requires closure of poor-performing schools if interventions prove unsuccessful.

Weaknesses:

High school graduation rates and post-secondary enrollment rates are not included.

The number of high quality schools in the State has decreased over the last few years. e37

Approval rates of new charter schools is not very high which questions the ambition of the applicant to create high quality schools.

Despite the requirement for closure of low performing schools, not many schools proposed to close in 2015.

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - Dissemination of Information and Best Practices

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the SEA's plan to disseminate information about charter schools and best or promising practices of successful charter schools to each LEA in the State as well as to charter schools, other public schools, and charter school developers (20 U.S.C. 7221b(b)(2)(C) and 7221(c)(f)(6)). If an SEA proposes to use a portion of its grant funds for dissemination subgrants under section 5204(f)(6)(B) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 7221c(f)(6)(B)), the SEA should incorporate these subgrants into the overall plan for dissemination. In determining the quality of the SEA's plan to disseminate information about charter schools and best or promising practices of successful charter schools, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The extent to which the SEA will serve as a leader in the State for identifying and disseminating information and research (which may include, but is not limited to, providing technical assistance) about best or promising practices in successful charter schools, including how the SEA will use measures of efficacy and data in identifying such practices and assessing the impact of its dissemination activities;

2) The quality of the SEA's plan for disseminating information and research on best or promising practices used by, and the benefits of, charter schools that effectively incorporate student body diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity and diversity with respect to educationally disadvantaged students, consistent with applicable law;

3) The quality of the SEA's plan for disseminating information and research on best or promising practices in charter schools related to student discipline and school climate; and

4) For an SEA that proposes to use a portion of its grant funds to award dissemination subgrants under section 5204(f)(6)(B) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 7221a(f)(6)(B)), the quality of the subgrant award process and the likelihood that such dissemination activities will increase the number of high-quality charter schools in the State and contribute to improved student academic achievement.

Strengths:

A plan of state-wide action, including the identification of best practices will be employed under a separate department, the Center for Best Practice. p60

The applicant identifies a wide variety of sources by which it will disseminate best practices. p 40

The applicant proposes to identify cases showing exceptional outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students, diverse student populations, and high at-risk populations. p 39

The applicant identifies case studies related to school climate that will be utilized.

Weaknesses:

Technical assistance has not been coordinated; it is in the process of being determined.

The applicant does not utilize outside agencies such as university/college research institutions, or independent research organizations to determine best practice methods or the collection and dissemination of successful charter schools.

The applicant does not identify a method for measuring if the distribution of best practices are causal for increased student outcomes.

The Center for Best Practices only identified educators to determine the best way to organize and distribute stories and related resources. It is recommended that a wide variety of parties be used in this determination, and distribution (behavioral experts, university researchers, community organizations, the parents/families being served).

The applicant does not identify a plan to disseminate research or best practices related to student discipline or climate. p39

The applicant plans to use only case studies that show exceptional outcomes. This standard is not clearly defined, nor does it identify which schools/grades/subgroups that would benefit from exposure to specifically successful case studies.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Oversight of Public Chartering Agencies

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the SEA 's plan (including any use of grant administrative or other funds) to monitor, evaluate, assist, and hold accountable authorized public chartering agencies. In determining the quality of the SEA' s plan to provide oversight to authorized public chartering agencies, the Secretary considers how well the SEA' s plan will ensure that authorized public chartering agencies are --

1) Seeking and approving charter school petitions from developers that have the capacity to create charter schools that can become high-quality charter schools;

2) Approving charter school petitions with design elements that incorporate evidence-based school models and practices, including, but not limited to, school models and practices that focus on racial and ethnic diversity in student bodies and diversity in student bodies with respect to educationally disadvantaged students, consistent with applicable law;

3) Establishing measureable academic and operational performance expectations for all charter schools (including alternative charter schools, virtual charter schools, and charter schools that include pre-kindergarten, if such schools exist in the State) that are consistent with the definition of high-quality charter school as defined in this notice;

4) Monitoring their charter schools on at least an annual basis, including conducting an in-depth review of each charter school at least once every five years, to ensure that charter schools are meeting the terms of their charter or performance contracts and complying with applicable State and Federal laws;

5) Using increases in student academic achievement as one of the most important factors in renewal decisions; basing renewal decisions on a comprehensive set of criteria, which are set forth in the charter or performance contract; and revoking, not renewing, or encouraging the voluntary termination of charters held by academically poor-performing charter schools;

6) Providing, on an annual basis, public reports on the performance of their portfolios of charter schools, including the performance of each individual charter school with respect to meeting the terms of, and expectations set forth in, the school 's charter or performance contract;

7) Supporting charter school autonomy while holding charter schools accountable for results and meeting the terms of their charters or performance contracts; and

8) Ensuring the continued accountability of charter schools during any transition to new State assessments or accountability systems, including those based on college- and career-ready standards.

Strengths:

Working relationships are in place with a majority of the state's authorizers, including quarterly consultation meetings and outreach efforts.

Strong statutory provisions addressing charter application requirements, and a state-developed common application (Colorado Charter Schools Standard Application) is made available for voluntary use. p41

School readiness standards exist for charters who offer Pre-K .p 41

Statutory provisions require annual monitoring and limit charter term length to 5 years.

Statutory provisions require primary consideration of academic achievement growth in charter renewal decision-making.

P. 41-42: Applicant provides a detailed plan outlining transitional guidance provided to authorizers regarding state accreditation and accountability during standards transition.

Weaknesses:

The large overall number of authorizers and indirect nature of SEA oversight of authorization activities may impede effectiveness of efforts to ensure consistency in authorizing quality.

Applicant response does not speak directly to how educationally-disadvantaged students are addressed via the authorization process.

The applicant notes a reliance on state's general school accountability system and School Improvement Plan processes,

rather than measures specifically addressing the circumstances of the state's charter schools. There is no mention of specific measures for alternative, virtual schools.

Monitoring, annual reporting and the use of increased student academic achievement in renewal decisions are addressed in global and in brief, and do not provide sufficient levels of detail to permit informed comments. p 41 and 42

A multitude of charter authorizers leads to a lack of consistent approach to addressing revocation and voluntary closure for reasons other than those prescribed in statute.

Because there is no direct provision of public reports on authorizer portfolios of schools within statute or policy, the applicant references state Open Records law which is an overly burdensome process for information that should be readily available to the public. Reporting of individual schools is based on state accountability system but not based on charter contracts or frameworks.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Management Plan and Theory of Action

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and the project 's theory of action. In determining the quality of the management plan and the project s theory of action, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The quality, including the cohesiveness and strength of reasoning, of the logic model (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) and the extent to which it addresses the role of the grant in promoting the State-level strategy for using charter schools to improve educational outcomes for students through CSP subgrants for planning, program design, and initial implementation; optional dissemination subgrants; optional revolving loan funds; and other strategies;

2) The extent to which the SEA' s project-specific performance measures, including any measures required by the Department, support the logic model; and

3) The adequacy of the management plan to --

i. Achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including the existence of clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks; and

ii. Address any compliance issues or findings related to the CSP that are identified in an audit or other monitoring review.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to propose a comprehensive management plan and theory of action for assessing the achievement of the objectives, including developing performance measures and performance targets for its proposed grant project that are consistent with those objectives. The applicant should clearly identify the project-specific performance measures and performance targets in its plan and should review the logic model application requirement and performance measures section of this notice for information on the requirements for developing those performance measures and performance targets consistent with the objectives of the proposed project. The applicant may choose to include a discussion of the project-specific performance measures and targets it develops in response to the logic model requirement when addressing this criterion.

Strengths:

The logic model is presents and generally represents the goals of the CSP program to increase the number of high quality charter schools through a variety of activities. p43 and 44

The project specific performance measures found on pages 45 through 51 provide details for all activities that the applicant plans to execute over the proposed grant term.

Performance Measures include a subgrant competition, monitoring of subgrantees, authorizer supports throughout the state, charter supports including technical assistance for both subgrantees and non-grantees and dissemination of best

and promising practices. Many of the activities center on attracting and retaining both educationally disadvantaged students but also a focus on students classified as ELL or those with an identified disability with an IEP. p47-52

Through use of baseline data for comparison for most activities, performance targets appear generally reasonable, New criteria is being developed for several components of the measures.

The applicant notes that a CSP monitoring visit was conducted in 2013 and findings are addressed with responses to each one. P51, 52

Weaknesses:

There is no mention of how the CSP program will foster innovation for educationally disadvantaged students nor is there a target for encouraging authorizers from specific geographies where there are higher percentages of economically disadvantaged students.

Reader's Score: 9

Selection Criteria - Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the SEA 's charter school subgrant program, including the extent to which the project design furthers the SEA' s overall strategy for increasing the number of high-quality charter schools in the State and improving student academic achievement. In determining the quality of the project design, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The quality of the SEA' s process for awarding subgrants for planning, program design, and initial implementation and, if applicable, for dissemination, including:

i. The subgrant application and peer review process, timelines for these processes, and how the SEA intends to ensure that subgrants will be awarded to eligible applicants demonstrating the capacity to create high-quality charter schools; and

ii. A reasonable year-by-year estimate, with supporting evidence, of

a) the number of subgrants the SEA expects to award during the project period and the average size of those subgrants, including an explanation of any assumptions upon which the estimates are based; and

b) if the SEA has previously received a CSP grant, the percentage of eligible applicants that were awarded subgrants and how this percentage related to the overall quality of the applicant pool;

2) The process for monitoring CSP subgrantees;

3) How the SEA will create a portfolio of subgrantees that focuses on areas of need within the State, such as increasing student body diversity or maintaining a high level of student body diversity, and how this focus aligns with the State-Level Strategy;

4) The steps the SEA will take to inform teachers, parents, and communities of the SEA' s charter school subgrant program; and

5) A description of any requested waivers of statutory or regulatory provisions over which the Secretary exercises administrative authority and the extent to which those waivers will, if granted, further the objectives of the project.

Strengths:

The applicant is a previous recipient of the CSP grant and has included a 70 page document outlining the entire program, the scope objectives, eligibility criteria for applicants, lottery and enrollment requirements, budget and fiscal guidelines, participation in evaluation and reporting, as well as the TA available for applicants and for grantees. P52, 53

The applicant notes that grantees will be monitored for Risk Assessment, Fiscal Monitoring, and Programmatic Monitoring and details for each of these areas. p 55- 57

The applicant plans to weight the priority points for applicants seeking to enroll higher numbers of educationally disadvantaged students.

The applicant will also utilize the weighted lottery to assign preference points in the CSP subgrant application. The applicant plans to share information about the grant competition in a variety of ways including through charter school ListServ, at the Charter School Boot Camp, Colorado Charter School Conference, and through electronic newsletters.

Two waivers are requested by the applicant in support of their state level strategy and planned use of this grant to support high quality charter schools:

A continuation of the approval for the weighted lottery; and

Approval for one-time, significant expansion charter projects to receive CSP subgrants.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not include percentage of successful grantees from previous CSP grant beyond carry over funding from final year of previous grant.

There is no mention of ensuring that the CSP grant will address geographic priorities in the State.

The applicant did not mention the possibility of simply hosting workshops to explain the subgrant competition and respond to questions for the greater community or organizations outside of the regular partners.

Reader's Score: 8

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - High-Quality Authorizing and Monitoring Processes

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1: High-Quality Authorizing and Monitoring Processes

To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that all authorized public chartering agencies in the State use one or more of the following:

a) Frameworks and processes to evaluate the performance of charter schools on a regular basis that include--

1) Rigorous academic and operational performance expectations (including performance expectations related to financial management and equitable treatment of all students and applicants);

2) Performance objectives for each school aligned to those expectations;

3) Clear criteria for renewing the charter of a school based on an objective body of evidence, including evidence that the charter school has (a) met the performance objectives outlined in the charter or performance contract; (b) demonstrated organizational and fiscal viability; and (c) demonstrated fidelity to the terms of the charter or performance contract and applicable law;

4) Clear criteria for revoking the charter of a school if there is violation of law or public trust regarding student safety or public funds, or evidence of poor student academic achievement; and

5) Annual reporting by authorized public chartering agencies to each of their authorized charter schools that summarizes the individual school 's performance and compliance, based on this

framework, and identifies any areas that need improvement.

b) Clear and specific standards and formalized processes that measure and benchmark the performance of the authorized public chartering agency or agencies, including the performance of its portfolio of charter schools, and provide for the annual dissemination of information on such performance;

c) Authorizing processes that establish clear criteria for evaluating charter applications and include a multi-tiered clearance or review of a charter school, including a final review immediately before the school opens for its first operational year; or

d) Authorizing processes that include differentiated review of charter petitions to assess whether, and the extent to which, the charter school developer has been successful (as determined by the authorized public chartering agency) in establishing and operating one or more high-quality charter schools.

Strengths:

The applicant meets most of this competitive preference in a variety of ways. The Colorado Department of Education's Schools of Choice Office utilizes robust tools and partnerships to support effective authorizing by both state agency (CSI) and local district authorizers. p 6-9

Strong measures of student- and school-level academic growth are incorporated both in the general statewide accountability system, and specifically to charter schools.

The applicant employs rigorous application and evaluation standards incorporated in detail into state law.

Colorado's Charter Schools Act and a charter school's contract jointly serve as the framework for initial authorization and ongoing monitoring.

School districts and authorizers are held accountable annually for the performance of all of their schools through an aggregate District Performance Framework which benchmarks progress toward state accountability standards.

Weaknesses:

No direct annual reporting requirements, especially in relation to charter authorizers – applicant makes reference to state Open Records Act.

No differentiated process for review of charter petitions at the state level, though applicant notes that the two largest replication authorizers (Denver Public Schools and the state Charter School Institute) both have such processes in place.

Reader's Score: 14

Competitive Preference Priority - Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: One Authorized Public Chartering Agency Other than a LEA, or an Appeals Process

To meet this priority, the applicant must demonstrate that 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 LEAs are the only authorized public chartering agencies, allows for an appeals process for the denial of an application for a charter school.

Note: In order to meet this priority under paragraph (b) above, the entity hearing appeal must have the authority to approve the charter application over the objections of the LEA.

Strengths:

The applicant has both a strong appeals process, including the ability to remand a binding decision with respect to an applicant at second appeal to the state Board, and an alternate statewide authorizer with primary jurisdiction in cases

where local districts either do not wish to exercise Exclusive Chartering Authority or that have lost that status due to academic performance. P 9-10

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses in this competitive priority.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/07/2015 11:56 AM