

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

Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Illinois State Board of Education (U282A150030)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
State-Level Strategy		
1. State-Level Strategy	15	12
Sub Total	15	12
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	9
Dissemination of Information and Best Practices		
1. Dissemination	10	10
Oversight of Public Chartering Agencies		
1. Oversight of Authorizers	15	14
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	105

Technical Review Form

Panel #8 - SEA Panel - 8: 84.282A

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Illinois State Board of Education (U282A150030)

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 grant will support teams with the capacity to operate high quality charter schools in high needs areas. This clearly demonstrates a commitment to leveraging the grant to support students in need as part of the larger state strategy targeting these students. (p. e23)

ISBE has a variety of activities to ensure that each charter is informed of all state and federal funds it is entitled to and eligible for. These activities include onsite assistance and workshops.

ISBE disseminates best practices and serves as a resource. This is a very innovative model, making a chartering authority, ISBE, a resource to all schools. (p. e25) Funds will be used to assist strong charter operators to identify areas in need and open charters in those areas. This targeting demonstrates a focused approach to reaching those students most in need. (p. e27)

Weaknesses:

No evidence of how financial support for charter school facilities will be provided.

Reader's Score: 12

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:

State law exempts charters from thousands of statutory requirements. This is very convincing dedication to allowing flexibility. (p. e28)

ISBE has a variety of activities to ensure that each charter is informed of all state and federal funds it is entitled to and eligible for. These activities include onsite assistance and workshops. (p. e30)

ISBE staff contact schools to ensure they know how to access funding and where to receive technical assistance. (p. e30)

These strategies demonstrate a sound strategy for ensuring charters receive the funding they are entitled to.

ISBE reviews complaints alleging discriminatory practices through formal state investigation and this helps ensure compliance. (p. e31)

Weaknesses:

No weakness found.

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:

ISBE can withhold renewal if student achievement is not improving. There are numerous examples of schools being closed or voluntarily closing, which has clearly led to a reduction in the number of academically poor performing schools. (p.e46)

CREDO study findings show clear academic success. By a variety of metrics, over the last five years, charters are equaling or exceeding in academic attainment. (p. e33-34)

Weaknesses:

The application provides no evidence of a demonstrated increase in the number and percentage of high-quality charter schools.

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 state plans to use the grant to utilize the MTSS to support educationally disadvantaged students in making progress. Use of the MTSS system is actually incorporated into the QSO subgrant applications. This demonstrates a focused effort to make sure these students receive support. (p. e35-37) Applicants with a focus on serving educationally disadvantaged students will receive priority consideration in ISBE's subgrant competition. (p. e36) Again, there is a clear focus on educationally disadvantaged students.

Charters serving these students receive preference in subgrant competition. (p. e36) This grant will also target schools with the lowest performing subgroups. (p. e37) It is clear the state is making an appropriate effort to see these students as a priority. Separate plans for serving students with disabilities and ELLs are a requirement for all charters. (p. e38)

Approaches are outlined to decrease the percentage of inexperienced teachers working with children in high poverty districts. (p. e37) Charters demonstrating innovative methods for serving these students will receive priority in the grant process. (p. e36) It is clear that structurally the state seeks to encourage innovation.

There is a five-year cycle for monitoring of compliance. ISBE provides additional monitoring. All Title I programs are also monitored regularly. Any schools found in violation are subject to increased focused monitoring. The state has a clearly documented approach to a strong monitoring system.

Weaknesses:

The burden for retaining educationally disadvantaged students is only during application process and not a part of the monitoring process.

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:

Performance reporting is available through the annual state report card. The Balanced Accountability Measure provides a comprehensive source of data. It is clear the state is focused on collecting, reporting and utilizing important data from charter schools. (p. e41-42)

Staff are being hired to assist strong charter operators in opening more schools. There is a clear vision for how many new charters will be introduced both within Chicago and outside of Chicago. (p. e43-44)

Authorizer will lose their authority to authorize if they do not demonstrate they are holding their charters accountable and closing them if necessary. This is a very focused and sound strategy for ensuring that low performing charters are closed and authorizers are encouraged to do so. (p. e45) ISBE can also withhold renewal if student achievement is not improving. There are numerous examples of schools being closed or voluntarily closing. (p. e46).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not specify the method for collecting performance data.

Reader's Score: 9

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:

ISBE will have a best practices work group. This group will identify best practices that can work within the existing regulations and those that require regulation change. It will then recommend to the governor and assembly to make those changes. ISBE has a variety of dissemination networks including electronic communications, foundation services and the Ed Leaders Network, and the work group. Clearly the state has made a comprehensive effort to disseminate both electronically and in person. (p. e48-49)

Subgrants are targeted to schools that effectively incorporate student body diversity and can disseminate these practices. (p. e50)

Subgrants will be awarded to charters that can identify their best practices in discipline and school culture. The ISBE will be instrumental in disseminating these practices and has a variety of methods to do so. (p. e51)

An external evaluation contract will be used to assess the effectiveness of the dissemination subgrants. The plan for this contract demonstrates a strong commitment to ensuring that the subgrants are producing positive outcomes for students. (p. e51)

Weaknesses:

No weakness found.

Reader's Score: 10

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:

ISBE has the authority to revoke both authorizers and charters they have granted. This demonstrates a strong incentive for authorizers to only seek and approve high quality charters. (p. e53)

Partnership with NACSA demonstrates a commitment to evidence based practices. This initiative shows a clear and strong desire to create the best schools as rules have been incorporated into ISBE administrative code. (p. e54)

Through the work with NACSA measurable expectations have been established and articulated. (p. e54)

Charters are monitored both annually and with an in depth review every 5 years. (p. e54)

These annual reports coming from the authorizers are in the standards. (p. e55) Standard 3.3 on (e126) reflects this.

Monitoring is conducted annually by authorizers and results are available to the public (e55).

Accountability during the transition to new assessments is covered under Standard 3.3 in the performance framework. (p. e126)

Weaknesses:

Performance expectations for alternative or virtual schools are missing.

Reader's Score: 14

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 clearly demonstrates a strong commitment to improving educational outcomes for students. Outcomes # 2 and 4 are very sound in this regard. (p. e57-58) (p. e72)

The performance measures clearly support the logic model. There are a multitude of measures that each support a different aspect including links to student achievement, charter performance and the grant awarding process. (p. e56-58) (p. e72)

There is a clear plan to achieve the objectives. It is strongly laid out through a clear description of tasks, entities responsible and timelines. This includes enhanced monitoring for schools out of compliance (p. e59-62)

Weaknesses:

No weakness found.

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 subgrant process will require both a program and budget section. The criteria clearly explain how awards will be given to applicants demonstrating the capacity to create high-quality charter schools. The exhaustive process includes detailed estimates and timelines. (p. e63-68)

The monitoring plan includes early and regular contact including phone calls, virtual meetings, semi-annual reports and various audits. This comprehensive plan is very strong as it allows for multiple points of contact. (p. e66)

ISBE will use a variety of data and reports to ensure that the areas of need are identified and subgrantees are prepared to meet these needs. It will also extend a preference to rural areas that are currently underserved. (p. e68-69)

Communication will be accomplished through a variety of electronic mediums. The SEA will also utilize community partners and organizations to extend this information to all constituents. (p. e69-70)

There is a clear description of the waivers and how they will further the objectives of the project. These include asking for a 5 year period rather than a 3 and also allowing them to award smaller awards. Both of these are important to the overall success of the plan. (p. e70-71)

Weaknesses:

None.

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:

Charters are held accountable through site visits, annual financial audits and submission of performance data. (p. e15). Charter contracts include links to academic performance standards. Reviews happen at least every 5 years and more often if the authorizer deems necessary. There are a number of clear criteria that will lead to a charter being revoked. These are quite comprehensive and include failing to meet academic progress or failing to meet standards of fiscal management. (p. e15-17) ISBE also has authority to remove an authorizer's power to authorize schools if appropriate oversight is not taking place. The charter law incorporates a variety of academic and operational expectations that must be part of each schools contract. This demonstrates a very sound performance expectation. (p. e17-19) The state of Illinois has a differentiated review process that takes into account the developer has been successful in the past, including its track record of academic success. (p. e22) There is also a "replication criteria" in CPS which allows for a streamlined application process. This shows a clear focus on allowing high performing organizations with prior success to receive additional charters. (p. e22)

Weaknesses:

Illinois do not provide for a final review by authorizers before a school opens for its first year.

Reader's Score: 12

Competitive Preference Pritority - 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:

There is a non-LEA authorizer. There is also an appeals process. The state can be the authorizer of a charter school(p. e22-23)

Weaknesses:

No weakness found.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted

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Reader #2: *****

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1. CPP 2

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Total	120	99

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Panel #8 - SEA Panel - 8: 84.282A

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Illinois State Board of Education (U282A150030)

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 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 of all local districts.

Since 1996, charter schools have been a part of the state's public education landscape, clearly indicating that charter schools will have a major role moving forward with well developed sub-grants integrated into the statewide education reform efforts. There has been much growth and diversity among charters, with the majority in the city of Chicago where there are significant needs for the students who are educationally challenged.

The governor appointed commission is an example of one state level strategy that has been successful.

Improving student outcomes and closing the achievement gaps are two areas to be addressed within the charter school community and clearly align with the state strategy.

The state provided foundation services which include professional development, at no cost to participants which could be considered a fiscal savings for the charter school community. Additionally, the applicant indicates that ISBE will work with the school and its authorizer to increase charter school access to State and federal funding and program opportunities in accordance with the funding equity requirements built into the Charter Schools Law, page 14. Funding equity activities are further discussed in the Policy Context for Charter Schools section, page 16.

Funding equity is included in the Charter School Law and therefore is clearly incorporated into the SEA's State-level strategy, referenced on page 14.

The applicant indicates that the Commission will continue to provide resources and technical assistance to charter school development teams and districts evaluating charter school options, which provides additional support for making sustainable changes to increase success.

Collaboration is described that would bolster current sharing efforts and create new foundational services in which educational innovations and community partnerships are used to create better school options in underserved communities.

Weaknesses:

No graduation rates or postsecondary enrollment data are provided.

How collaborative efforts will ensure sharing of data and promising instructional and other practices, between charter schools and other public schools or providers is not sufficiently described.

The applicant does not address 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.

Reader's Score: 12

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 Illinois State law. The exception is State laws, standards, and assessments required for all public schools. Key flexibilities are delineated on page 15. Some of the key aspects of these flexibilities include a separate governing body, complete autonomy in the school's design, staffing flexibility and complete autonomy over budgets and expenditures.

Access to federal funds and programming is clearly addressed and included in the Charter School Law as indicated on page 15.

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 on-site and virtual technical assistance, workshops, collaboration with partners and others.

The applicant clearly describes the Charter school and LEA assurances regarding State law and federal law. The Charter School Law was amended in 2014 indicating that flexibility does not include violation of laws designed to prevent discrimination in public schools.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses 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 based on the CREDO Report, page 19. CREDO is an independent research organization based at Stanford University. Including an external research organization decreases the likelihood of bias in data presented.

The number and percentage of academically poor-performing charters are minimal compared to high performing charters based on the CREDO Report.

The data from CREDO provides evidence that students in charter schools across demographics show academic achievement and attainment equal to or exceeding academic achievement and attainment of students in TPSs.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide sufficient information in the chart on page 19 that could better describe the system used to determine the action taken by the authorizer or the SEA and specific reasons for the action.

The applicant does not include high school graduation rates and college and postsecondary education enrollment.

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 SEA describes a commitment to assist educationally disadvantaged students by holding schools responsible for contributing to and improving the statewide achievement gap. A holistic approach to reducing and eliminating the achievement gap for educationally disadvantaged students is described and will include a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) as indicated on page 21.

Illinois CSI (page 22) will focus services targeted to address the performance of educationally disadvantaged students.

The applicant indicates that they will ensure each initial and renewal charter application that fully addresses how the school will attract, recruit, admit, enroll, retain, and serve educationally disadvantaged students equitably and meaningfully, page 24.

The applicant clearly addresses how the needs of students with disabilities, ELLs, and homeless students will be addressed as indicated by new requirements for renewal charter school applications which must include separate plans on ISBE approved forms for the provision of educational services to English learners and students with disabilities, page 24.

Program innovation will be encouraged by MTSS and other initiatives described on page 23 and 24. For example, Educator Effectiveness, Title I School-wide Flexibility and Family Engagement, are included in Appendix E which is the

Equity Plan.

Targeted professional development and technical assistance will be provided to support innovation in charter schools and includes teaching models for ELLs, among other innovative practices.

Monitoring to ensure compliance with Federal and State laws is done on a five year cycle and more frequently in some instances as required.

Weaknesses:

Recruiting and retaining students who are educationally disadvantaged is only addressed through the sub-grant application and not a fully developed component of the entire process.

Monitoring for ELL students was after a five year period and not annually, which would better serve the 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 SEA's systems for collecting, analyzing, and publicly reporting data on charter school performance is extensive and covers data across various dimensions related to student academic performance. This is supported by the new statewide school accountability system which is inclusive of all schools (Balanced Accountability Measure, page 27). The new system includes multiple measures and is fully described in Selection Criteria (f).

The applicant will take three key project actions to ensure the creation of high-quality charter schools. These are described on page 29. Additionally the applicant expects growth of at least 24 new charter schools outside of Chicago over the next five years. A chart is provided on page 30 that indicates the breakdown of the 20 charters over the next five years.

The SEA has an ambitious plan to support closure of academically poor performing charter schools and this plan is a part of the Charter School Law. Additionally, the applicant describes examples of facilitating turnarounds through new management.

It is reported that charter schools have willingly closed in the face of ongoing low student performance, page 32. This action requires recognizing and taking responsibility for student learning and other aspects of operating a charter school.

Weaknesses:

Though the applicant will collect data from all public schools, no system for accurately collecting data from charter schools is described.

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. They do not intend to rely on test scores alone, but will include a redesigned Report Card with new features and metrics. They will also use the Illinois 5 Essentials Survey described on page 33.

With the 5 Essentials Survey, it will be possible to determine with certainty which schools are having success and in which areas.

The applicant will convene a Best Practices and Innovation Work Group to review and develop various tools to identify best practices in charter schools that have immediate transferability to all public schools.

The SEA's plan for disseminating information and research on best or promising practices, including those for educationally disadvantaged students is extensive and includes a list of strategies on page 25.

The SEA's plan for disseminating information and research on best and promising practices related to student discipline and school climate are included on page 37 in the description of the dissemination sub-grant initiative. Traditional means of communication are included.

The SEA proposes to use a portion of its grants funds to award dissemination subgrants. The two year dissemination grants proposed are clearly described on page 36 and include Student body Diversity Sub-grants and Student Achievement, along with Educational Innovation Sub-grants.

The applicant also describes how dissemination work will be evaluated. The applicant will use an external evaluator to collect a wide range of data described on page 37 to answer the ultimate question which is "what difference have these activities made?"

The applicant will also contract with Dissemination Specialist to ensure all dissemination activities are coordinated and coherent within current statewide regional delivery systems. This is a strength of the plan because a Dissemination Specialist will have the opportunity to focus specifically on the important aspect to sharing lessons learned and evidence-based best practices.

Weaknesses:

Though dissemination sub-grants will be awarded, there is a lack of specific components that will be required in order for applicants to be awarded funding beyond consulting with a Dissemination Specialist.

Reader's Score: 8

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:

The applicant describes how they will seek and approve charter school petitions from developers that have the capacity to create charter schools that are high quality schools which include full use of the state regulations and outcome of work from the Independent Charter School Authorizers Task Force (Appendix E).

Approving charter petitions and other design elements are addressed on page 40 and are components of the Illinois authorizer standards for quality charter authorizing. The inclusion of these components into the standards is important to quality charter school authorizing.

The applicant will establish measurable academic and operational performance expectations as addressed on page 40 and a component of the Illinois authorizer standards for quality charter authorizing.

Illinois plans to use increases in student academic achievement as one of the most important factors in renewal decisions and revoking or encouraging voluntary termination of charters held by academically poor-performing charter schools and addressed on page 40 as part of the Illinois authorizer standards for quality charter authorizers.

Illinois will provide annual public reports on the performance of each individual charter school regarding the school's charter or performance contract as addressed on page 40 as part of the Illinois authorizer standards.

Illinois will support charter school autonomy while holding them accountable for results as addressed on page 40 as part of the Illinois authorizer standards, by holding authorizers accountable to the standards.

Illinois will ensure continued accountability of charter schools during transition to more robust learning standards and accountability system as addressed on page 40 as part of the Illinois authorizer standards. The applicant intends to incorporate the authorizer standards into the Common Core standards and a new State Assessment, Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC).

Weaknesses:

There is missing performance expectations data for charter schools that serve alternative school students, virtual models, and those that serve Pre-K students.

The applicant does not disaggregate individual charter school information in the annual report, but includes the authorizer's report of the charter schools, page e55.

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 well developed and includes cohesiveness and strength of reasoning evidenced by the inclusion of outcomes, expected impact, and how outcomes will be measured. The logic model is aligned with the State-level strategy for using charter schools to improve educational outcomes for students.

Tasks, timelines, and responsible parties are attached to each project-specific performance measures and the measures align with the logic model on pages 42-48.

The management plan is adequate to achieve objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget based on the information provided.

The applicant has addressed the adequacy of the management plan to address any compliance issues.

Weaknesses:

It is unclear how the project will be staffed and the percentage of time essential staff will be assigned to carry out the tasks delineated in the management plan.

Reader's Score: 8

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 subgrants for planning, program design, and initial implementation is clearly described and includes the application and peer review process, timelines, and verification of eligibility. The applicant will use an expert team from a cross section of areas including finance, governance and operations, curriculum and other areas. This will ensure that sub-grants are well developed and applicants have a clear idea of what is expected in a high quality application.

The applicant provides evaluation criteria for awarding planning grants and components that are clearly delineated on pages 49 and 50.

A reasonable year by year estimate of the number of subgrants is provided on page 52 and 53. The applicant intends to award up to 25 pre-charter planning subgrants each of the five years of the grant and up to 10 program design grants before the charter opens. Other estimates are provided on page 53.

The process for monitoring CSP sub-grantees is adequately addressed on page 54.

Communication steps to be used to inform all stakeholders are sufficiently described and provided on page 55 and include elements such as the Superintendent's Weekly Message, social media and the ISBE's regular website. Several other communication efforts are listed and will be provided by other partner entities.

The applicant clearly describes the waiver request of statutory provisions including project period limitations and eligibility criteria set in Section 5210 of ESEA, which is further explained on page 56. These waivers will allow ISBE to award a five year CSP award in order to achieve all program objectives and outcomes and also to be allowed to award small pre-charter planning grants. It is the intent of the applicant to support developers to undertake activities to better understand the community and develop stronger applications.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

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 operational performance expectations based on Illinois state law and requirements for all public and charter schools.

Performance objectives are aligned to performance expectations and evidenced by on-site visits, annual financial audits, submission of performance data, and the charter renewal process.

Clear criteria for renewing the charter is delineated and specifically aligns with the performance objectives, organizational and fiscal viability and fidelity to the terms of the charter as reflected by the Illinois law as cited in the narrative.

Clear criteria for renewing and revoking the charter is described and enforced. The determination is based on whether the charter school fails to meet or make reasonable progress toward achievement of the content or pupil performance standards identified in the charter contract. IBES has statutory and regulatory authority to remove an authorizer's power to authorize charter schools if inappropriate oversight or mismanagement has been determined.

Annual reporting is required as with any public schools, based on Illinois law and statues which require frequent performance reports, annual financial audits, and data for the Biennial Charter School Report (Appendix E).

Clear and specific standards and a formalized process that measures and benchmarks the performance of all public charter schools is described and includes the performance and annual dissemination of information on performance through the Biennial Charter School Report.

The application includes a clear description of the authorizing process with clear criteria for evaluating the sub-grant application.

The applicant codified a set of "Principles and Standards for Authorizing Charter Schools." (Appendix E). One major strength of the new standards is that the authorizer must demonstrate increases in student academic achievement for all groups of students and this is one of the most important decisions for charter renewal or revocation decision making.

There is 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. The review process is required by the Principles and Standards used by authorizers. Various factors of this process are described (Standards 2.1 and 2.3) in Appendix E.

Weaknesses:

It is unclear whether there is a multi-tiered clearance, including a final review immediately before the school opens for the first operational year. This clearance would enable the charter school to make any changes prior to arrival of students and staff that might be of major significance.

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 applicant clearly provides one authorized public chartering agency that is not an LEA and it is supported by the Charter School Law and ISBE's administrative rules. Further there is a model request for proposals for developers seeking a charter school, renewal criteria, and a performance/accountability plan to evaluate charter school performance.

The Charter School Law allows for two types of authorizers and an appeals process that is described and specifically addresses how the process works.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/31/2015 01:30 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/07/2015 12:02 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Illinois State Board of Education (U282A150030)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
State-Level Strategy		
1. State-Level Strategy	15	12
Sub Total	15	12
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	11
Vision for Growth and Accountability		
1. Growth and Accountability	10	8
Dissemination of Information and Best Practices		
1. Dissemination	10	8
Oversight of Public Chartering Agencies		
1. Oversight of Authorizers	15	13
Management Plan and Theory of Action		
1. Management Plan	10	9
Project Design		
1. Project Design	10	9
Sub Total	80	64
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
High-Quality Authorizing and Monitoring Processes		
1. CPP 1	15	13
Sub Total	15	13
Competitive Preference Pritority		
Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process		

1. CPP 2

	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Total	120	99

Technical Review Form

Panel #8 - SEA Panel - 8: 84.282A

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Illinois State Board of Education (U282A150030)

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:

Illinois will use the CSP subgrant to create the Quality School Options (QSO) grant to support districts with the State's lowest-performing schools (e26)

The applicant identifies closing achievement gaps that vary from community to community as a priority (e23)

This applicant has grown the charter sector to 147 campuses for 62,000+ students since 96-97 (18 years), with 133 of 147 in Chicago (e24); the lack of charters in many other parts of the state is a self-identified problem with only 10 of 852 school districts having authorized a charter school still in operation.

Illinois has created a state level Commission to develop charter school options to address learning gaps through innovation and high-quality operations (e24), and addressing areas with most need (e26).

The applicant is implementing a new accountability system with more measures to evaluate academic growth (e25) that will yield how well others are improving outcomes and to establish partnerships across schools and districts.

The applicant proposes "Quality School Options" grant will support operating high-quality charter schools in high-need areas (e23)

Data is shared across the state through Regional Office of Education (e25) and includes no-cost supports and PD via ISBE. Also created the Ed Leaders Network to share best practices (e25-26).

In Sept 2012 the applicant created Illinois Center for School Improvement (Illi CSI) (e26)

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not identify key academic achievement and attainment standards for high school graduation rates, nor college and other postsecondary education enrollment rates.

There is no evidence of funding equity measures.

The applicant does not address financial barriers charter (especially new) schools face during start-up, and throughout its initial term. In particular, facility financing or placements are not addressed.

Reader's Score: 12

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 addresses and meets all criteria, and specifically outlines exemption measures that would otherwise inhibit an authorizer or charter school from autonomous budgeting, expenditures, staffing, procurements, and curriculum. (e29) Charter schools in Illinois are statutorily required to be held consistent with the State's goals, standards, and assessments established by ISBE for all public schools, and a limited number of laws for student security measures. (e29)

All charter schools are made aware of federal and state funds, for all subgroups (e29); webinars and trainings are provided (and publically posted) on an on-going basis, and partners collaborate with charter schools on key grant-related opportunities. (e30)

Title, IDEA, and other federal funding are provided to new charters within 5 months of opening or significantly expanding enrollment either by the state if its own LEA, or through its local school district if it is not its own LEA. (e30)

This applicant ensures that all charter schools are in compliance with anti-discrimination laws by a plan that was established in June 2014. (e31)

ISBE accepts, reviews and resolves complaints from any person or entity alleges discriminatory practices through

technical assistance. E31

Weaknesses:

There are 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:

The applicant identifies a significant change in the state's annual standardized achievement tests to meet a more rigorous definition of high-quality. This resulted in a drop in both test scores and schools meeting the definition of high-quality at this moment in time (e31).

The applicant has very few charter schools classified as academically poor-performing (e32). For those that are, actions have taken place, including the voluntary closure of a poor-performing school.

The applicant executed a partnership with CREDO to conduct a cross-longitudinal analysis of academic performance of students attending charter or traditional-run schools.

The analysis measured across a wide variety of subgroup levels, including race/ethnicity, gender, English proficiency, low-income status, special education status, grade level, and prior test scores (e33).

Results showed that students in charter schools outperformed their virtual peers in both reading and math by approximately two weeks of learning (e34).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not demonstrate an increase in the number of high-quality charter schools. It explains how the state system of measurements shifted in 2010, but does not provide the data, nor does it norm itself (recommend usage of percentages) to identify ways in which academic improvements are being made across all charter schools.

The chart on p e33 does not provide enough detail as to what "strengthened accountability plan", or "robust annual performance reviews" require. Additional information is needed to explain the plan and the reviews.

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 proposes its QSO (CSP) subgrant will use the state's current scope of work to close historical achievement gaps through planning, program design, and implementation of its subgrant competition (e35).

The applicant's QSO (CSP) subgrant will reinforce the state's Multi-tiered System of Support (e35) which focuses data-driven supports of all learners.

Illinois has created a Statewide System of Support (SSos) to supply services and resources for student improvement (e26 & e36)

The applicant notes the creation of a Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) that is accessible to all schools across the state, to systemically address barriers to student learning (e35).

Training and technical assistance is provided to ensure best practices in both academic programs and the climate and culture of a school are promoted.

The applicant has instituted the Illinois Center for School Improvement (CSI) to improve services that result in improving the performance of educationally disadvantaged students through its "Focus Services" plan (e36), which identifies an better equips the lowest-performing subgroups in the lowest performing schools.

The applicant will use an Educator Effectiveness initiative to recognize effective teacher and school leaders (e37)

The applicant will utilize funding opportunities to address subgroup performance gaps (e37)

Applicant created and will continue to use a Family Engagement Framework (e38 & e230)

The applicant has measures to ensure compliance with Federal and state laws (e38)

The applicant's new accountability system now incorporates an equity measure to hold schools accountable to reducing achievement gaps (e35 & 2015 Illinois Equity Plan-e396).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide a complete implementation plan regarding how its subgrant program will assist students who are educationally disadvantaged

The proposed subgrant does not identify how to reduce or eliminate achievement gaps—only that ISBE currently takes a holistic approach to meeting the needs through its Multi-tiered System of Support (MTTS) (e35 & e188).

The state's efforts at attracting or recruiting and retaining educationally disadvantaged students remains the responsibility of the charter school during the application and renewal phases rather than monitoring more frequently (e38).

The applicant has a five-year cycle for monitoring district compliance regarding English learners rather than annual monitoring which is preferable.

Reader's Score: 11

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 has recently revised its school accountability system to incorporate differentiated recognition (e41), and is reported through its State Report Card (e47).

The Balanced Accountability Measure (BAM) is of high-quality, and takes into account data that measures outcomes, including high school graduation rates and college and other postsecondary education enrollment rates (e41).

Student performance is measured across a wide variety of measures, including Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO), and subgroup performances (e42). The measurements take into account progress (student growth) and equity.

Measures exist for the closure of both schools and authorizers if neither show annual academic progress or achievement (e45).

There is evidence of phasing out low-performing schools (e46)

Charter schools will utilize the QSO (CSP) subgrant's Data Specialist and Community Engagement Specialist to focus on improvements before necessitating closure (e47).

Future plans include peer review visits on professional practices.

This applicant indicates a strong plan under the QSO (CSP) subgrant to build awareness of, attract new, and replicate already existing, high-quality charter schools

The applicant anticipates 24 new charter schools will operate outside Chicago in the next five years, and an additional 24 within Chicago (e44).

The applicant ambitiously estimates that 25% of all charter schools will be high-quality by the end of 2020-21 (currently at 15%) which will be the result of work done by independent group- Illinois Network of Charter Schools (INCS)'s Charter Design Institutes.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not indicate the system for collecting performance data. The applicant should indicate if data is self-reported or collected by a third party.

The reliance on assistance of both INCS and the Commission is a concern. Both external entities may be incentivized to create new charter schools. Although there are measures in place for the Commission to overturn a local school district's charter school application approval, this has only happened 3 times out of 43 appeals in 3.5 years (e44).

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 plans to create a Best Practices and Innovation Work Group that will make recommendations to the ISBE, Governor, and Illinois General Assembly on statutory or regulatory impediments to innovation in all public schools (e48).

The Group will use a variety of best practice measures, as well as its professional experience and expertise, to arrive at conclusions.

Both qualitative and quantitative data will be used to confirm efficacy and impact, and the evaluation of innovation.

The applicant has been applauded, nationally, for its State Report Card, which takes into account not only academic achievement and growth, but student diversity by race/ethnicity, and educationally disadvantaged students (e47).

A variety of platforms are used to share data and best practices, including weekly messages, PD and networks, as well as its Shared Learning Environment (e49).

The applicant shows an awareness that effective practices related to discipline and climate come from the teachers and schools themselves, and as such, the state needs to be able to capture, promote, and utilize such measures (e49).

The applicant will competitively award two subgrants: Student Body Diversity, and Student Achievement and Educational Innovation to support equity (e50).

Results of the study will inform state lawmakers and policymakers to pursue changes to existing impeding factors. If awarded, the subgrant will include an independent evaluation piece to measure student performance and best practices of students in urban and rural schools (e51).

The applicant will further award bid and award an external evaluation contract using administrative funds (e51) to ensure measures of equity are taking place, and student performance and innovation are not being hindered.

By utilizing an external data collector and evaluator, the applicant ensures that activities are coordinated and coherent with statewide delivery.

Weaknesses:

The Best Practices and Innovation Work Group is comprised entirely of experts in a variety of educational experiences, but there is a lack of acknowledgement or collection of information and input from the communities (namely, families) being served. Technical assistance to communities at-large is recommended.

The applicant provides portals for others to access, but does not provide information as to how ISBE will be made aware of how/if information is being received (e49).

Historical data or other supporting evidence is needed to justify the estimate for the number of high-quality charter schools the proposed subgrants will produce.

Reader's Score: 8

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 has identified a number of ways to strengthen authorizers by holding them accountable for improving the quality of schools that are approved.

The ISBE has identified a capacity to seek and approve petitions from developers that can create high-quality charter schools (e52).

The Charter Schools Law (passed in 2009) and the creation of an Independent Charter School Authorizers Task Force helped implement opportunities for independent charter authorizers and oversight of them (e52 & e54)

The applicant plans for Task Force reports on best practices, which are further used by authorizers to determine high-quality charter schools.

All of the elements from Factor 1 hold true here—legislative action now requires strict oversight of authorizers to address strategic vision aligned with evidence-based practices (e54)

Alignment with NACSA principles and standards for authorizing and even incorporated into the administrative code e 54 Academic and operational performance expectations are clear, consistent, and of high-quality.

Increases in student achievement as one of the most important factors in renewal decisions are established in Standard 3.3 (e126)

The Secretary sets authorizer standards that include the monitoring of the authorizer's portfolio of schools is conducted annually and publically available (e55).

Schools are monitored annually (Standard 4.1, e128)In-depth reviews are conducted at a minimum of five years (e54)

The new state assessment and accountability was addressed in in 2013 to raise performance expectations in coordination with Common Core Standards and PARCC, as addressed in Standard 3.3 (e126).

Weaknesses:

The Narrative does not specifically identify measures taken to ensure authorizers approve petitions with design elements that address educationally disadvantaged students (although it is enforced by established Administrative Code Standards 3.2 and 3.3 on pages e125-126).

Performance expectations of alternative, virtual, and pre-kindergarten are missing.

Public reports are provided annually, but do not mention if the performance of each individual charter school with respect to meeting the terms of, and expectations set forth in, the school's charter of performance contract.

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 and performance targets 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 Management plan is presented, detailed, and provides impacted parties, measures, and reasonable timelines (e56)

According to the Management Plan, Outcome number two is aligned with the state strategy to create high quality educational opportunities for children in Illinois through charter schools and the quality of those charter schools will be measured through the application for and strategic use of the CSP (QSO)subgrant (e57)

Subgrants for planning, program design, and initial implementation are well- planned (e60)

Dissemination of best practices subgrants are identified (e62)

Requirements identified by the ISBE as performance measures within the logic model are sufficiently outlined (e72)

Objectives of the management plan are clearly outlined, with responsible entities and timelines e63

Weaknesses:

The subgrant recipient timelines are missing as well as the explanation for how the ISBE will evaluate and determine efficacy of subgrants

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 subgrant awards process is of high-quality and includes an external peer-review evaluation (e63)

The timelines are clearly identified (e65)

Estimates of the number of awards are identified (e66)

The ISBE will monitor the subgrant awardees in a multi-pronged plan that incorporates early, regular contact.

Monitoring will further be done through semi-annual reports with quantitative data on goals and impact (e66)

All grantees will be subject to various audits, based on requirements and protocols (e66)

The applicant will use a variety of data and reports to determine areas of need, as well as analyses of educational environments by staff in the Special Education Services and English Language Learning Divisions (DELL) (e68)

Due to clustering in urban environments, preference will be given to charter school applications submitted in geographic regions not currently served by charter schools, especially rural areas (e69)

The applicant will utilize the INCS, IBHE, and IASB to share information about the subgrant and encourage applicants (e68).

Existing community outreach efforts will also be conducted, including communities already conducting projects such as the 21st Century Community Learner Centers project (e69)

The applicant has requested two waivers – to waive the project period limitation and award a grant for 5 years instead of 3 and to waive the eligibility criteria set forth in Section 5210(3) in order to award small grants to teams planning to develop a charter but have not yet submitted an application. Both of these waivers are reasonable and support the overall objectives of the subgrant program (e70 and e66, 67). The first waiver allows a longer time period to seek out and approve the highest quality charter applicants and the second waiver will allow promising applicants the support needed to develop their program and submit a high quality application.

Weaknesses:

Assessment of areas of need are conducted entirely through district-reported agencies. The applicant would benefit from outside analyses, including, but not limited to community organizations, and the families being served by charter schools.

Reader's Score: 9

Priority Questions**Competitive Preference Priority - High-Quality Authorizing and Monitoring Processes****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:

a) The applicant meets recently created, in coordination with NACSA's Principles & Standards (p. e19), a framework that considers goals, objectives, and pupil performance standards at the school-level. The framework (called the Model Accountability System, (e20)), specifically measures three (3) performance dimensions: academic success, financial health, and organizational compliance. The framework incorporates terms for renewals, corrective action plans for those schools not meeting standards, and metrics to revoke a charter for failure to uphold such standards. Schools are reviewed annually (p e20), and in the case of CPS, reports are released publically.

b) The applicant began a taskforce in 2009, which resulted in the independent Charter School Commission with statewide chartering jurisdiction and authority (e52). Law was made to collect a biennial report from each authorizer to include a wide variety of performance and progress measures towards a strategic vision (e53) that is released to the public. Based on this report, ISBE has statutory authority to remove and revoke authorizing powers.

c) In Illinois charter school applications are provided a clear set of 15 criteria, and face multiple stages of review, including a desk review, interviews, a public meeting, and due diligence. Authorizers use evaluation "teams" of properly trained evaluators to review applications from start to finish. In CPS, the review of applications also incorporates Neighborhood Advisory Councils (e21).

d) This applicant meets all criteria in section d as evidenced by the differentiated types of reviews for first-time applicants, an existing school operator, a replicator, contracting with ESP, virtual/online school, or targets student populations (e22).

Weaknesses:

a) Annual reports are released publically for Chicago Public Schools (e20), but it is not clear if other authorizers make this information as easily accessible to the public.

b) The Illinois Charter School Commission submits biennial (not annual) reports to the ISBE as stipulated in the competitive preference (e52).

c) It is not clear if the application evaluation teams are independent, or employees of the authorizers which is a potential weakness. (e21).

Reader's Score: 13

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:

A and b - The applicant meets this preference because legislation in Illinois allows for two types of authorizers, and an there is appeals process to the Charter Commission (e22).

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses in this area

Reader's Score: 5

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