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

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Georgia Department of Education (U282A150008)
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	8
Quality of Plan to Support Ed. Dis. Students			
1. Ed. Dis. Students		15	11
Vision for Growth and Accountability			
1. Growth and Accountability		10	9
Dissemination of Information and Best Practices			
1. Dissemination		10	8
Oversight of Public Chartering Agencies			
1. Oversight of Authorizers		15	14
Management Plan and Theory of Action			
1. Management Plan		10	8
Project Design			
1. Project Design		10	9
	Sub Total	80	67
Priority Questions			
Competitive Preference Priority			
High-Quality Authorizing and Monitoring Processes			
1. CPP 1		15	10
	Sub Total	15	10
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 #2 - SEA Panel - 2: 84.282A

Reader #1: **********

Applicant: Georgia Department of Education (U282A150008)

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:

Educationally disadvantaged students receive a weighted lottery benefit in admissions to charter schools. (p. e27)
Schools targeting urban and rural populations receive additional points in CSP subgrant competitions. (p. e27)
These strategies are targeted at closing the achievement and attainment gaps.
Drew Charter School's partnership with Atlanta PS is a positive example of an education reform effort. (p. e27)
OSD school district, if realized, will be a unique innovation. (p. e28)
Both of the above are great examples of collaboration.
DOE offers an annual facilities grant worth 1.4m. (p. e29)
DOE provides direct assistance in obtaining Federal funds, including workshops. (p. e29)
DOE works closely with LEAs to ensure charters receive their appropriate allocations. (p. e30)
DOE conducts an annual compliance review of all LEAs in the state which demonstrates an active commitment to equitable funding throughout the year. (p. e30)
DOE created a Title I program specialist for charter schools. (p. e32)
The Charter Schools Division with Financial Budgeting Office created a spreadsheet charters can use to calculate their appropriate funding from various sources. This is a strong tool for charters. (p. e32)
Dissemination grants are available to increase collaboration. (p. e32)
Charters serving students who would attend the lowest-performing schools are favored in their application and in grant funding. (p. e27)

Weaknesses:

The applicant was unclear on what the overall state strategy is and how these components fit into it.
There are no clear consequences for LEAs not properly funding 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:

Charters are in charge of their own budget, staffing and curriculum. Each school is organized as a non-profit. (p. e33)
Each school's autonomy is bolstered by state law (p. e18)
The SBOE holds monthly meetings for all charter schools regarding federal funds which is a sound way to provide detailed information. They also provide a variety of electronic sources for information which is a comprehensive approach. (p. e33)
Extensive training on state and federal law for LEAs through “LEA boot camp” is evidence of a focused commitment. (p. e34)
Schools receive tailored training throughout the review process based on their needs. This demonstrates an ongoing sound effort to uphold the appropriate laws and regulations. (p. e34)

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Past Performance

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

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

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

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

   Strengths:

   In 2014, 11 charters were high performing, 25 were rewarded high progress and only 2 were designated as focus schools, compared to 18 in 2013. No charter school received the lowest rating. This is convincing evidence the number of high performing schools has increased (p. e37)
   It is documented that multiple studies demonstrate that charter schools in Georgia are “beating the odds.” (p. e37)
   There is evidence that Georgia is committed to closing low performing schools as evidenced by the number of schools that have not been renewed over the last two years. (p. e38)

   Weaknesses:

   There is not data for all five years.

Reader's Score: 8

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:

Georgia did not renew a charter that had a student population not reflective of its attendance zone. (p. e41). This demonstrates a convincing dedication to ensuring that charters serve the students who are disadvantaged. They also require schools to include recruitment plans. This is a very sound tool for encouraging charters to serve disadvantaged students. (p. e41) Sub-grantees will also be required to demonstrate yearly how they serve these students. Also, the "secret shopper" model is a very innovative and focused compliance tool. (p. e41).
Georgia has utilized its high performing charter schools who have success with educationally disadvantaged students by having them share best practices with neighboring traditional public schools. This provides a great opportunity to encourage innovation. (p. e41). CSP funds would also be used to hold at least two annual trainings on serving educationally disadvantaged students. This is a very focused effort to target the needs of these students and quote innovative. (p. e41)
Georgia has a variety of strategies to ensure compliance for educationally disadvantaged students including data analysis, incorporation into the review process, annual monitoring and a liaison to handle complaints and link them to the review process. This last component is quite innovative and shows a dedication to ensuring that schools are upholding the law when it comes to all students. (p. e42-43)

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not demonstrate how the subgrant program would assist students in meeting and exceeding standards or how it would eliminate achievement gaps for disadvantaged students. It only describes how it would assist them in attending charter schools. (p. e39-40)

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:

Reports from each school are analyzed and shared on a yearly basis. This is evidence of ensuring accountability. (p. e44) Georgia provides for extensive analysis and reporting. They have a comprehensive system for reporting data which includes a variety of monitoring in addition to the yearly reports for all schools. (p. e44-45).
The plan for the Opportunity School District is innovative, involving systematic collaboration among schools, and will definitely lead to the creation of high quality charter schools. (p. e46)
Their plan involves working with nationally successful charter management operators to bolster schools, provide training and also encouraging successful charters in GA to expand. (p. e47)
They document a clear vision of the coming increase in charters. (p. e47).
Schools on probation have one year to complete an action plan or be terminated. (p. e48)
There is evidence that Georgia is committed to closing low performing schools as evidenced by the number of schools that have not been renewed over the last two years. (p. e38)

Weaknesses:

There are not alternatives if the OSD does not become a reality.

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:

The annual report and use of "Beating the odds" analysis are evidence of a strong plan to disseminate information. The establishment of an interactive tool to allow schools to partner with charters having success in a particular area is quite innovative. (p. e49)
Georgia's law is a focused effort to increase diversity in charter schools. The incorporation of recruitment plans is also a sound policy for increasing diversity. These elements coupled with the BTO analysis and partnership mentioned above will help disseminate this information. (p. e50)

The establishment of an interactive tool to allow schools to partner with charters having success in a particular area is quite innovative. (p. e49)
The DOE will track and analyze the performance of students who are implementing a charter school's best practice. This is a sound strategy for monitoring the impact. Also, subgrantees will have to create performance measures related to the effectiveness of their dissemination grants. This is one component of a comprehensive subgrant process, involving multi-level reviews (p. e51)

Weaknesses:

School discipline and climate are not explicitly mentioned.

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:

Schools are required to be approved twice, by two different agencies. This ensures a comprehensive approval process which is highly likely to lead to quality schools (p. e51)
Schools must have recruitment plans for recruiting, admitting and maintaining educationally disadvantaged students as well as students who are ethnically and racially representative of their attendance zone. Being encouraged to serve these

students will compel schools to seek out the best strategies for educating them. (p. e51-52)
The renewal process is comprehensive and stresses success in these areas. It is clear the measures are comprehensive as a number of schools have not met expectations and closed. (p. e52)
The monitoring system is quite comprehensive and includes annual, five year and interim assessments. This level of monitoring is very sound and comprehensive. In addition, it is a required by the state that authorizers complete their processes with due diligence. (p. e53)
Schools must meet or exceed their approved student achievement goals as part of their five year review. This is an appropriate way to ensure that only schools who are improving academic outcomes for students persist. (p. e53)
Georgia provides a comprehensive annual report on each school that includes a variety of analysis. From these reports authorizers report on their portfolios of schools. This process is comprehensive. (p. e53)
Charters must exists as independent non-profits with their own independent boards. It is clear charters are held accountable to their contracts as a number have been closed for not doing so. (p. e53)
New state assessments or accountability systems are incorporated into charter contracts on an ongoing basis. This is an appropriate way to continue to hold charters to the highest standards. (p. e52)

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not mention alternative or virtual charter schools.

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:

All charter contracts require charters to perform at the 50th percentile or higher. This is a very convincing model to ensure all charter schools are performing soundly. (p. e54)
The grant prefers schools that will locate in high needs districts or near schools in need of improvement. This is an effective way of leveraging the grant to encourage improvement. (p. e54)
The performance measures call for 85-90% of schools “beating the odds” and 54 new schools being created in 3 years. This clearly and completely supports the logic model. (p. e57)
The plan clearly identifies the objectives and provides a convincing process (including ongoing monitoring) and performance measures including admissions standards, trainings and financial targets (p. e61-63).

Weaknesses:

It is unclear how compliance issues or findings would be addressed.

Reader's Score: 8

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:

Subgrantees will be monitored on an annual basis and receive tailored training at least 3 times a year. Three external raters evaluate each grant. Raters are given three weeks to read and evaluate each applicant. (p. e65)
Monitoring takes place in person and on site. Additionally, the subgrantees must also undergo the normal review process. (p. e69)

Targeting is being done to reach both urban and rural areas as well as focusing on the dissemination of best practices for working with educationally disadvantaged students and students with disabilities (p. e69) This strategy is very comprehensive for reaching all students.
DOE will advertise on its website, listserv and newsletter. (p. e69) These strategies are extensive enough to reach all interested parties.
There is a clear description of what waiver they wish to use and what impact it will have. (p. e70)

Weaknesses:

The applicant received a previous CSP grant but did not discuss the quality or success of the previous pool.

Reader's Score: 9

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:

There is mandated charter board training initially and on an ongoing basis (p. 8)
The state and their authorizer will monitor each school on an annual basis. (p. e13)
A yearly report from each school is required on academic, organizational and financial goals. (p. e22)

GaDoe evaluates annually each school and provides feedback. (p. e23)
Annual audits and annual reports are required from each school by GaDoe (p. e16)
New rules and guidelines have been passed to monitor chartering agencies. (p. e23)
GaDoe is issuing memo that ranks local boards and their success as authorizers. Consequences are also in place for boards that are not effective. (p. e23)
Multi-tiered clearance exists as applicants begin at the local level and once approved move on to the state. (p. e24)
A one-month process for opening a new school in available for successful charter developers. (p. e25)

Weaknesses:

There is no evidence of clear criteria for revoking the charter of a school, though (p. e18) references charters that were revoked.
There is no evidence of a final review immediately before a school opens for its first operational year.
There is not clear evidence of annual reporting by authorized public chartering agencies.

Reader's Score: 10

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.(p. e25)

   Weaknesses:

   No weakness found.

Reader's Score: 5

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Panel #2 - SEA Panel - 2: 84.282A

Reader #2: **********

Applicant: Georgia Department of Education (U282A150008)

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 state has created a number of accountability strategies in order to assess the progress of all schools. Two key measures are: 1) the College and Career Readiness Performance Measure Index (CCRPI), a value-added measure; and 2) the Beat the Odds assessment which includes all of the measures used in the CCRPI but controls for race/ethnicity, free and reduced lunch, educationally disadvantaged students, students with disabilities and English language learners, so schools with similar populations can be compared (pages 5, 14 & 30).

The Charter Schools Accountability Project identifies and evaluates four essential elements for success, illustrated by a pyramid: rigorous academic performance expectations; high-functioning governing boards, financial sustainability and legal compliance (page 2, Appendices D1, D2, D3).

The partnerships such as that of Drew, a high performing charter school that has been successful raising the achievement of Educationally Disadvantaged students, with a neighboring cluster of Atlanta schools (pages 13-14) and the legislature allowing for the creation of an Opportunity School District, are good ideas that provide additional strategies for improvement statewide (pages 13-14).

Charter schools in Georgia receive their fair share of federal education funds (pages 15-16). They also can apply for facilities grants annually to expand, build or improve facilities (page15). The Financial Budgeting Office in collaboration with the CSD, created a spreadsheet that charter schools can use to calculate their share of local, state and federal funding (page 18).

One emphasis in the CSP subgrant is dissemination. Currently the GaDOE compiles a report that summarizes charter

school performance data and shares it with the legislature, LEAs and the general public. A number of groups work together with the GaDOE to collect and analyze data: the Governor's Office of Student Achievement, the State Charter School Commission and the Regional Education Laboratory-Southeast (pages 29 & 30). The goal is to identify high-performing schools, especially those successful with Educationally Disadvantaged students in order to disseminate the best practices (page 34-35). Further, analysis of data from the Beat the Odds assessment can be used to identify strength areas in high-performing schools (page 35). Two dissemination grants will be awarded to schools that have demonstrated successful work with educationally disadvantaged students in urban or rural settings and one to a school that successfully educated students with disabilities.

Weaknesses:

The overall state-level strategies are not clear. It would seem that the strategies are to provide rigorous standards and measure them and provide feedback to all schools. If schools fail to meet performance standards, they could be converted to charter status or new charter schools could be created in areas where there are low performing schools. The narrative is unclear. The individual elements all seem to be there but are not coherent. The application didn't mention whether State and Local funding is equitable for charter schools. It would be helpful to know what the consequences are for non-compliance in the areas of operations, governance or finances.

While there are some promising techniques being used to collect and analyze data, it is not clear how they will be organized to inform the grant application process. It is also unclear how the dissemination sub grants will demonstrate their effectiveness.

Reader's Score: 10

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:

Charter schools in Georgia have a high degree of flexibility in exchange for an equally high degree of accountability (pages 18-19). Over the years, the legislature has expanded the number of authorizers and the level and quality of monitoring. The Center of School Reform rates Georgia's charter school legislation number 5 in the country for charter school quality, choice, teacher quality, transparency and online learning (pages 20-21). State law supports both flexibility and accountability (page 18).

Charter school funding and the mechanisms developed to assure equity, allow charter schools to be assisted in getting their fair share of all local, state and federal funds (pages 15-16 & 18-19). Workshops, federal funding notices, eligibility lists and SBOE monthly meetings regarding federal funds are all positive efforts to improve the distribution of funds.

The SCSC provides training (LEA boot camp) annually to its portfolio of schools and differentiated according to the needs identified during annual on-site monitoring visits (page 20). This assures that LEAs have an understanding of their responsibilities in accessing federal funds and in complying with all applicable aspects of federal law such as IDEA.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Past Performance

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

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

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

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

Strengths:

The data presented indicates an increase in the number of charter schools and the number of students in charter schools over the past ten years (pages 21-25).

Improvement is shown beginning with the application process; the number of applications submitted vs. the number approved demonstrates the extent to which the process has become more rigorous and more likely to result in the approval of high quality charter schools (page 24). Once approved, charter schools show high-performance and are designated High-Performing or Reward status while no charter schools are in the Priority category for low-performance (page 21-22). The state is willing to and has closed schools if they do not meet or exceed standards. An independent study by CREDO found that math and reading achievement by students in charter schools in Atlanta showed greater gains than did students in traditional schools (page 23).

Weaknesses:

While gains in achievement were noted, there were no charter school student achievement data and no comparison of achievement by similar students in traditional schools to those in charter schools for the past five years.

Reader's Score: 7

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 provides data that indicates that a majority of students who attend charter schools in the state are “people of color” (page 25). One goal of the sub grant is to identify high-performing schools, especially those successful with Educationally Disadvantaged students, in order to disseminate the best practices (page 34-35). Further, analysis of data from the Beat the Odds assessment can be used to identify strength areas in high-performing schools (page 35). Two dissemination grants will be awarded to schools that have demonstrated successful work with Educationally Disadvantaged students in urban or rural settings and one to a school that successfully educated students with disabilities. The added emphasis will help create more high-performing charter schools to serve Educationally Disadvantaged students.

   Given the emphasis on identifying best practices that have proven to help increase the achievement of Educationally Disadvantaged students, the creation of new charter schools using these models will likely increase achievement and help close the achievement gap between Educationally Disadvantaged students and all other students (pages 34-35).

   The state plans to build on successes of the previous CSP grant to encourage innovation that will result in increased achievement for Educationally Disadvantaged students (page 27).
   There is a coherent system of monitoring in place that will be strengthened by standard settings and training for authorizers (pages 28 - 29). Having a liaison to handle complaints will help solve problems before they are taken to a higher level or negatively impact schools (page 29).

Weaknesses:

It isn't clear how student achievement will improve after they have had an opportunity to attend a charter school. That will depend on what happens in the schools to improve achievement, discipline and school climate. There are no examples of innovative strategies or program models or effective governance produced by the CSP grant, so it is unclear how innovation will be encouraged.

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:

Currently the GaDOE compiles a report that summarizes charter school performance data and shares it with the legislature, LEAs and the general public. A number of groups work together with the GaDOE to collect and analyze data: the Governor's Office of Student Achievement, the State Charter School Commission and the Regional Education Laboratory-Southeast (pages 29 & 30). The goal is to identify high-performing schools, especially those successful with Educationally Disadvantaged students in order to disseminate the best practices (page 34-35). Further, the analysis of data from the Beat the Odds assessment can be used to identify strength areas in high-performing schools (page 35).

The growth of charter schools over the past five years and the projected number in the future (page 32) provide data to indicate that the planning and implementation sub grants and dissemination sub grants is ambitious and doable (pages 31-32). The state may also use the creation of the Opportunity School District to help close failing public schools and replace them with charter schools (page 14).

Systems of monitoring and evaluation are already in place starting with the rigorous evaluation of charter applications (page 24) and culminating in closure when charter school students do not meet performance expectations (page 24 & 33). Improving the probation process as part of the Charter School Accountability Project will enhance the system of monitoring (page 25 & 34).

Weaknesses:

It is unclear how many OSD schools would be created. It would be important to have an alternative plan if the OSD is not implemented. There are no clear criteria for revocation and probation.

Although the Charter School Accountability Project was mentioned in several places, it was not well explained.

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:

   Currently the GaDOE compiles a report that summarizes charter school performance data and shares it with the legislature, LEAs and the general public. A number of groups work together with the GaDOE to collect and analyze data: the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, the State Charter School Commission and the Regional Education Laboratory-Southeast (pages 29 & 30). The goal is to identify high-performing schools, especially those successful with Educationally Disadvantaged students in order to disseminate the best practices (page 34-35). Further, analysis of data from the BTO can be used to identify strength areas in high-performing schools (page 35). Two dissemination grants will be awarded to schools that have demonstrated successful work with educationally disadvantaged students in urban or rural settings and one to a school that successfully educated students with disabilities.

   Charter school best practices will be published in the Charter School Annual Report and disseminated to LEAs, other charter schools and local communities. In addition, it will be available online on the Charter School Division website and distributed to the legislature (page 34).

   The state has created a number of accountability strategies in order to assess the progress of all schools such as the College and Career Readiness Performance Measure Index (CCRPI), a value-added measure, and Beat the Odds (BTO) which includes all of the measures used in the CCRPI but controls for race/ethnicity, free and reduced lunch, educationally disadvantaged students, students with disabilities and English language learners, so schools with similar populations can be compared (pages 5, 14 & 30).

   The likelihood is high that the emphasis on dissemination will be successful in leveraging best practices from the last grant cycle to improve learning especially for Educationally Disadvantaged students (pages 27-28, 31-37).

Weaknesses:

It might be helpful to disseminate information to community groups and organizations in areas where there are large numbers of Educationally Disadvantaged students. There are no explicit references to school discipline and climate in the narrative. It isn't clear how sub grantees will measure the effectiveness of their efforts.

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 State BOE has final authority over all charter school authorizers. Day-to-day operations and oversight will be provided by the well-qualified personnel from the Charter School Division. The Assistant Superintendent of the CSD will be in charge of management of the budget. The Director of the CSP along with an additional staff member will provide technical assistance to all LEAs and the SCSC (pages 50-51). The CSD will provide training to all authorizers to provide them with information about the sub grants, best practices, and federal and state law (page 36). They will hold authorizers accountable for implementing the sub grants and the "stringent approval process" for charter petitions. The grant will likely

improve the ability of authorizers to add high-performing charter schools to their portfolio.

There are State BOE rules that provide guidance to the GaDOE and emphasize the need to increase diversity by requiring authorizers to implement plans to increase diversity and mirror the racial/ethnic makeup of the community in which their charter schools are located (pages 9 -10, 35-36). The initial petition requires detailed descriptions of all aspects of the proposed charter school including academic goals and a description of the instructional program that must address the needs of educationally disadvantaged students.

The multi-tiered review has clear evaluation criteria (page 9-10, Appendix D-3 Rubric for Charter Approval). Charter contracts are legal and binding agreements between the charter school, the authorizer and the state board so that all parties to the contract can be held accountable (Appendix D-2 Charter Contract). The SEA also provides a Monitoring Tool used to guide school visits. The tool includes a section to verify the services to disadvantaged populations that is designed to assure oversight and accountability (Appendix D-1 Monitoring Tool).

The state has created a number of accountability strategies in order to assess the progress of all schools such as the College and Career Readiness Performance Measure Index (CCRPI), a value-added measure, and Beat the Odds assessment which includes all of the measures used in the CCRPI but controls for race/ethnicity, free and reduced lunch, educationally disadvantaged students, students with disabilities and English language learners so schools with similar populations can be compared (pages 5, 14 & 30). Authorizers are held accountable for the participation and performance of the chartered schools in their portfolio.

Georgia's Charter School Accountability Project evaluates charter schools against the terms of their contract every year (page 2). The GaDOE also ranks authorizers each year based on their successful performance of their portfolio of charter schools (page 25). Systems of monitoring and evaluation are already in place starting with rigorous evaluation of charter applications (page 24) and culminating in closure when charter school students do not meet performance expectations (page 24 & 33). Improving the probation process as part of the Charter School Accountability Project (page 25 & 34) will enhance and strengthen authorizers' performance through new standard-setting activities. In cases of renewal and revocation of a charter, authorizers must use academic performance as the primary factor in their decision (page7).

A well-developed system for collecting, analyzing and reporting important performance measures are published annually and used to evaluate local boards who are authorizers as well as the charter schools (page 40).

Charter schools in Georgia have a high degree of autonomy but are held to high standards by their authorizer (page 18-19, 39-40). Anticipated transitions in accountability and assessments are incorporated into the charter contract (page 38).

Weaknesses:

The application does not differentiate between types of charter schools such as virtual, alternative, etc. The Charter School Accountability Project is not well explained.

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 plan for the CSP grants is a logical extension of work already begun, legislated and then operationalized by the GaDOE, to build on past performance and correct some problems in the system (pages 40 - 41). The focus is on producing high-quality charter schools that promote the academic growth of educationally disadvantaged students (pages 40). The incorporation of the Beat the Odds assessment and the ability to create an Opportunity School District support the logic of the grant and have the potential to improve performance of all students (page 14, 30, 35 & 40).

The plan has four clear objectives, activities designed to reach the objective and short, medium and long-term anticipated outcomes (pages 42, 44, 46, 48). Following details of each objective there are process and performance indicators which are clear and will provide guidance for sub grantees and the department. The plan is to utilize assessments that are already in place (pages 43, 45, 47, 49). The monitoring process includes technical assistance, financial audits and on-site visits (page 42 & 55).

Weaknesses:

It is unclear how compliance issues would be addressed.

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 processes for awarding grants are clear, well defined and within a reasonable timeframe given resources and personnel available (page 53 -54). Applications must receive a score of 70 or above from two of three independent raters to be recommended for funding. Preference points won't be awarded until after the application is deemed eligible for funding. Applicants who fail to be deemed eligible in the first round may revise their application with technical assistance from the CSD. This helps assure that the applications will produce high-performing charter schools. The department has presented a reasonable/doable estimate of the number of sub grants to be funded each year (page 52).

The process for monitoring sub grants is clear and appropriate with enough personnel and resources to be successful (pages 50-55). The GaDOE has been proactive and used data for the Charter School Annual Reports to identify schools that may be eligible for dissemination sub grants and will encourage successful CMOs from out of the state as well as in. They are already actively recruiting community leaders in areas that have need to improve ED students (page 55).

The GaDOE will be responsible for publicizing the CSP grant through the Charter School Division newsletter, monthly Charter School Committee meetings, the BOE meetings, LEAs across the state and on appropriate websites (GEPA 427 Statement, page 55).

The GaDOE has requested a "substantial expansion" waiver that would make more spaces available in high-performing charter schools (page 56).

Weaknesses:

The applicant received a previous CSP grant but did not indicate the percentage of eligible applicants that were awarded subgrants or how this percentage related to the overall quality of the applicant pool. There were no indications of the Impact of the previous grant on the state's charter and traditional schools.

Reader's Score: 8

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - High-Quality Authorizing and Monitoring Processes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Strengths:

Georgia's evaluation and review processes are clear and well-founded, illustrated by a pyramid with four essential elements: rigorous academic performance expectations; high-functioning governing boards, financial sustainability and legal compliance (page 2, Appendices D1, D2, D3). There is a rigorous application process followed by desk audits and on-site visits that allow for intervention before a charter school reaches the point of revocation or non -renewal (page 3).

One excellent feature of the evaluation process is the high level of training of charter school governing boards that require 15 hours of training during the initial approval stage of receiving a charter (page 8). Volunteer governing boards are critical for the sustainability of charter schools so training is an essential element in the production of high-quality charter schools.

Weaknesses:

The application did not provide a clear and detailed description of the performance expectation framework. It isn't clear if there will be a final review immediately before a charter school is opened and criteria for revoking a charter are not provided.

Reader's Score: 13

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:

Georgia has evolved from district authorization as the only option to now being awarded a charter through three routes: local school districts in which charter schools are not LEAs but are a part of an LEA; the State Charter School Commission which authorizes charter schools that operate as LEAs; and the State Board of Education that can charter State Chartered Special Schools that have been denied charters by local boards (pages 11-12). This provides parents and communities with a choice of authorizers and authorizers with the ability to build distinctive portfolios of schools.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: **5**

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/05/2015 08:54 PM

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/05/2015 01:06 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Georgia Department of Education (U282A150008)
Reader #3: **********

		Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
State-Level Strategy			
1. State-Level Strategy		15	10
	Sub Total	15	10
Selection Criteria			
Policy Context for Charter Schools			
1. Policy Context		5	4
	Sub Total	5	4
Selection Criteria			
Past Performance			
1. Past Performance		10	7
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	9
Oversight of Public Chartering Agencies			
1. Oversight of Authorizers		15	11
Management Plan and Theory of Action			
1. Management Plan		10	8
Project Design			
1. Project Design		10	7
	Sub Total	80	61
Priority Questions			
Competitive Preference Priority			
High-Quality Authorizing and Monitoring Processes			
1. CPP 1		15	12
	Sub Total	15	12
Competitive Preference Pritority			
Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process			

1. CPP 2		5	5
	Sub Total	5	5
	Total	120	92

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - SEA Panel - 2: 84.282A

Reader #3: **********

Applicant: Georgia Department of Education (U282A150008)

Questions

Selection Criteria - State-Level Strategy

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:

According to the applicant summary of overall strategies, there is a focus on providing opportunities for educationally disadvantaged students. The narrative includes a description of a lottery system that is utilized to ensure access to charter school candidates. (Page 13). Additional strategies to bolster access for the targeted population include:
--assigning extra subgrant points for schools serving urban and rural students, also
--subgrant priorities embedded in funding state requests for schools serving the targeted economically disadvantaged student groups. (Page 13).
These strategies indicate a solid connection between chartering efforts and state wide strategies.

The applicant offers examples of the strategies to be utilized for efforts to provide opportunities for the targeted student groups. The evidence indicates the SEA has a strong focus on meeting the needs of a disparate student population. Strategies include: (Page 13)
-- 100% of previously awarded dissemination grants focused on “promising academic practices” in the targeted communities.
--Drew Charter School partnership with public school literacy program. (Page 13)

The applicant provides that it will use state generated “Beating the Odd” analysis to identify areas in need of improvement for lower performing schools and explains the process to identify and implement improvement. These initiatives indicate a solid focus on meeting the academic needs of students in the state's low performing schools. (page 14) The process:
--Uses Beating the Odds data to “determine areas of growth”
--Analyzes the “root cause” (Page 14)
--The Georgia Charter Schools Association provides targeted training opportunities in multiple delivery formats

The applicant provides facilities funding using academic progress as a measure. Increased funding is provided throughout the school year for charter schools if enrollment expands. (Page 15). The state Charter School Department provides for Charter schools functioning as LEAs on equitable funding, budget management, and ways to access funding. (Page 15)

A clear process is described that is likely to ensure equitable federal funding for charter schools throughout the state. The allocation process utilizes (Page 17)
--collaboration with LEAs
--ranking according to poverty levels and individual school data
--funding allocation listings that includes charter schools

Annual enrollment audit outcomes are used to ensure appropriate funding levels, and training is mandated for new charters schools to review federal funding policy and accessibility.
--federal formula funding
--accessing federal formula funding
Technical assistance provided (Page 17)

The application provides notification to charters schools regarding federal funding that schools are entitled to including ESEA, and IDEA. Available federal funding Information disseminated through
--regularly scheduled meetings,
--posted guidelines, and
--state wide workshops (Page. 17)

The state collaborates with local education boards and the state Financial Budgeting Office to distribute a spreadsheet for charter schools to calculate regional and federal funding allocations. The spreadsheet is also used as an accountability measure to ensure local districts are in compliance with funding allocation guidelines. (Page 18)

Dissemination grants are used to encourage collaboration and share best practices with focus on educationally disadvantaged students. This is likely to ensure the selection of a pool of applicants with the capacity to meet key grant objectives to share pertinent data and instructional practices. (Page 17)

There is evidence of a strong collaboration between charter schools and public schools to meet the state goal of using the charter school process to build academic achievement. The state relies on objectives embedded in dissemination grants to share best practices within educationally disadvantaged populations. (Page 18)
Strategies include:
--disseminating best practices
--weighed lottery that expands opportunities for the targeted population to attend charter schools
--dissemination grant priorities that encourage collaborations between charter and private schools
--equitable funding assurances
--a focus on lowest performing areas to provide support

Weaknesses:

The Opportunity School District is not expected to be in place until after the 2016 election cycle and the applicant fails to provide a clear timeline for expected implementation, nor does the application provide a description of alternative measures should the Opportunity School District initiative fail to pass. (Page 14)

The application lacks the inclusion of quantitative or programmatic evidence illustrating robust, clearly aligned connections to the overall state academic initiatives across various subgroups. The response in this area would be improved with the addition of a brief description of programs or initiatives that align these goals such as career or college readiness. (pg. 14)

The narrative does not clearly indicate the consequences in place for local agencies or districts found to be hindering or refusing charter school funding.

It is unclear the level at which the state will monitor municipalities to ensure local funding, such as property taxes, are fairly allocated to charter schools.

The applicant fails to provide a clear timeline for the placement of the new Fiscal Operational Accountability Manager expected to be hired.

The application would be improved with a clear summary of the effectiveness of the process in the past. Possible explanations include:
--A description of the types of charter/public collaborations currently or previously in place due to the dissemination grant funding.
--Quantitative data indicating academic achievement in schools
--A summary of the initiatives or programs that were established from the collaborative dissemination grant process.

The applicant does not address Factor 3.ii within the narrative. The response in this area would be improved with the addition of details outlining how charter schools are established in ways that provide viable options for students who currently attend, or would otherwise attend, the State's lowest-performing schools.

Reader's Score: 10

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:

On pages 18-19, the applicant describes state statute that establishes strong legal support for charter school flexibility. In particular, Georgia state statute. 20-2-2065(1)(a) provides charter school autonomy in the area of fiduciary, academic, administrative powers as non-profit under oversight of individual charter school boards. Each school is organized as a non-profit. The law is comprehensive and determines specific areas of autonomous management and accountability that indicates charter schools are in charge of key school functions including:

--curriculum and instruction
--fiduciary oversight
--day to day management
--school facilities

Additionally, (Page 18) comprehensive charter school board training is mandated and covers key topics including:
--fiduciary accountability,
--charter school governance,
--federal and state policy

The applicant describes a charter school awareness process in which the state Charter Schools Division, Director of Finance for Charter Schools, the State Board of Education circulate information regarding eligible federal funding. These efforts indicate a focus on funding equity for charter schools. (Page 19) Efforts include:
--monthly meetings with the State Board of Education and the Charter Schools Committee
--guideline posted on the Charter School Department website
--workshops throughout the state
--federal funding notices
--inclusion on the state Department of Education list of eligible education organizations

A particularly unique initiative is the Charter School Boot Camp that provides targeted training for charter schools. This initiative is likely to build the capacity of schools statewide to use the benefits of their autonomy and flexibility to develop effective programs and operations.

The applicant states there are 22 schools operating as Local Education Agencies. According to the narrative, the plan to ensure these autonomous charter schools are in compliance with federal laws is as follows: (Page 20)
--As a component of the application process, the chartering authority requires candidate schools to provide evidence of their capacity to sustain a Local Education Agency.
--The application process mandates training covering school operations and compliance
--State Charter School Committee provides guidance on school operations upon charter approval
--During the charter term, the chartering authority uses the outcomes from annual school monitoring to schools to mandate targeted training.

Weaknesses:

The application does not clearly articulate how federal funding awareness efforts are tracked and monitored. The response in this area would be improved with the addition of information describing the tools and processes to be used to track the effectiveness of awareness efforts, how often the disbursement of funds is evaluated for equity across the state, and what responses for local responses are in place based on what the monitoring reveals.

The application lacks a description of policy that ensures compliance with specific federal laws outlined in the SEA-CSP application. The response in this area would be improved with the addition of laws, policies, and processes that ensure compliance with the specific with sections 613(a)(5) and 613(e)(1)(B) of IDEA (20 U.S.C. 1400, et seq.).

Reader's Score: 4

Selection Criteria - Past Performance

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 provides two goals utilized over the previous five years to guide chartering efforts.
—Goal #1 - the increase of total high quality charter schools in the state
--Goal #2. Charter school academic achievement will equals or exceed schools throughout the state and within districts (Page 22) These established goals indicate the solid SEA efforts to create and sustain high quality charter schools throughout the state.

The narrative states there are rigorous, differentiated, and targeted efforts to reduce the number and percentage of academically poor-performing charter schools and provides as an example the rigorous application process in which, during the 2014-2015 cycle, 7 applications out of 26 were denied. A chart is provided as evidence showing the history of charter applications and approvals. (Page 23)

The applicant provides evidence to support their commitment to closing low-performing charter schools including:
--2014-2015: 9 charters were suspended
--2013-2014: 5 charters were suspended

The state indicates efforts to improve the charter probation process to increased accountability and school closures. The probation process:
--is part of the Charter School Accountability Project
--holds charter schools accountable to high standards in academic progress, compliance, governance, and finances.
--Gives schools on probation one year to implement a plan for improvement.
--Terminates the school's charter if there is no improvement.

The narrative includes quantitative data on past performance that indicates continuous increases in the number of high quality charter schools statewide and the applicant provides two charts as evidence of relevant increases. (page 21)

The data indicates Georgia has seen a steady increase in the number of charter schools over the previous five years. The applicant provides adequate evidence that reveals continuous improvement in charter school performance over the previous five year period. Significant data includes:(Pages 22-23)

--The highest performing charter schools are among the top 5% of Title I schools over previous three year period
--An increase from 17 to 25 total charter schools were among the 10% of high progress schools, over the previous three year period
--A reduction in the number of charter schools with a graduation rate of 60% or below from 18 schools to 2 schools).
--No charter schools were ranked among the lowest 5% of Title I schools in the state.
-- Charter school students in Atlanta experienced an increase in reading that exceeds their public school peers.

Weaknesses:

The chart provided on page 21 illustrates an increase in the total number of charters in the state. There is no discussion found in the narrative that clearly identifies the total number of high performing schools. The response would be improved with details or data that clarifies the indicators to determine a high performing charter school and a summation of how many of these schools have been identified over the previous five years.

The narrative lacks detail on indicators used to identify schools for placement on probation. A solid response would provide greater detail regarding the indicators of success that were used to determine which school would be placed on probation.

Reader's Score: 7

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 provides data describing the targeted educationally disadvantaged student population that outlines race, disability, and socio-economic factors and compares the numbers to students enrolled in public traditional schools and the nation. The data indicates a significant population of educationally disadvantaged students are expected to be served by charter schools and that the SEA plans to target on meeting the needs of these students. (Page 26)

The narrative describes recently passed law O.C.G.A. § 2022066(a) supporting the use of weighted lotteries to bolster access for educationally disadvantaged students in charter schools. Additionally, the applicant indicates the state Department of Education is planning to use CSP funds to support the weighted lottery initiative by awarding additional points to sub grant applicants for the inclusion of the weighted lottery enrollment policies for school serving the targeted student population. These efforts indicate a solid commitment to ensuring resources for charter schools to serve the needs of educationally disadvantaged students. (Page 26)

The applicant provides a summary of past performance and charter school success regarding meeting the needs of educationally disadvantaged students. The strategies include subgranting four dissemination grants to share best practices in closing achievement gaps with neighboring traditional public schools. All charter schools are required to perform at or above the state’s achievement rate. This discussion and evidence indicate the state is likely to ensure charter school innovations targeted to meet the needs of educationally disadvantaged students are shared with the stakeholders. (Page 27-28)

The state Department of Education plans to award dissemination grants to be used to:
--further best practices with urban and rural economically disadvantaged students and
--further best practices for students with disabilities (Page 28)

A comprehensive plan is in place to appropriately monitor schools to ensure educationally disadvantaged students are attracted, recruited and retained. The plan includes:
--clear consequences, including charter revocation, for failure to target educationally disadvantaged students
--mandated recruitment planning for charter schools to target educationally disadvantaged students
--Annual CSP grant monitoring that specifies how schools serve students with disabilities, students from under resourced communities, English language learners, and examines racial equality in student discipline.
--A comprehensive monitoring tool, a sample of which is provided in the appendix
--plans to inquire about policies surrounding the targeted populations during the next competition cycle as a component of the charter application process (pages 27-28)

The narrative discusses legal compliance and the measures in place to monitor schools including:
--Legal compliance as a component of the State Charter School Accountability Project
--Legal compliance as an indicator of a high quality charter
school.
--annual FTE analysis conducted by the state Department of Education to uncover enrollment concerns or patterns of discrimination

CSP subgrantees are monitored to ensure student equity including data and policies related to:
--students with disabilities
--English Language Learners
--student discipline, recruitment and enrollment
--legal compliance

The applicant states probation and charter revocation are probable consequences for schools whose policies are not in keeping with state expectations. (Pages 33-34)

Weaknesses:

The response in this area would be improved with the discussion of efforts to ensure access for educationally disadvantaged students to attend schools with educational or operational programs they might not otherwise have opportunity or access to attend or plans to ensure school diversity.

The plan to meet the needs of students with disabilities and English Language Learners lacks detail to ensure it is in compliance with IDEA or civil rights laws.

The narrative lacks detail describing ways the state will encourage charter school innovation. The response in this area would be improved with the addition of a brief description of models, policies, supports, or structures that are designed to improve the academic achievement of educationally disadvantaged students.

Reader's Score: 11

Selection Criteria - Vision for Growth and Accountability

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 state Department of Education collaborates with the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA), the State Charter School Committee the Regional Education Laboratory Southeast) to collect and analyze data annually. (Page 29) and as a component of the renewal process. (Page 30) It appears evident efforts are in place to ensure comprehensive reporting includes information on: (Page 30)

-- student achievement
--school discipline rates. O.C.G.A. § 2022067.1.
--pertinent student subgroups (race, disabilities, ELL)
--school climate
--graduation rates
--attendance rates

The applicant provides detail on ambitious strategies, such as the Beating The Odds analysis, that will be used to determine the "value added by charter schools" (Page 30), that are likely to provide solid support for the creation of high-performing charter schools throughout the state. Additionally, the state definition of a high-quality charter school appears appropriate in keeping with federal guidelines and includes rigorous academic achievement, and comprehensive accountability standards. (page 31)

The state provides a chart to illustrate the charter school expansion projections and the applicant indicates the increases will be driven upon implementation of the Opportunity School District which focuses on traditional school conversions to charter schools. (page 32) According to the application, expected growth is more than 200 charter schools by 2021, an increase of approximately 100 schools over the current year. These initiatives and accompanying evidence indicate an ambitious effort to reduce the number of poor performing schools while simultaneously increasing the percentage of high quality charter schools throughout the state. Plans also include:
--A focus on high-need communities and educationally disadvantaged students
--Community collaborations to recruit appropriate start-up leadership
--expanding successful charter schools that serve educationally disadvantaged students

The narrative states there are continuous efforts to reduce the number and percentage of academically poor-performing charter schools and provides as an example the rigorous application process in which, during the 2014-2015 cycle 7 applications out of 26 were denied. A chart is provided as evidence showing the history of charter applications and approvals. (Page 23) The narrative and accompanying evident indicate an overall commitment to reducing the impact of low performing schools.

The applicant provides evidence to support their on-going commitment to closing low-performing charter schools including:
--2014-2015: 9 charters were suspended
--2013-2014: 5 charters were suspended

The proposal describes a probation process that indicates focused efforts to increase school accountability and school closures. This effort, if implemented with fidelity, is likely to bolster individual school capacity to develop and sustain high quality charter school programs. The probation process:
--is part of the Charter School Accountability Project

--holds charter schools accountable to high standards in academic progress, compliance, governance, and finances.
--Gives schools on probation one year to implement a plan for improvement
--Terminates the school's charter if improvement does not take place

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not discuss what alternatives are in place to support their expansion plans should the Opportunity Schools District initiative fail to be approved in the 2016 election year.

The applicant does not delineate the expected number of high quality charter schools to be created with the plans.

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 State Education Agency has solid set of practices and policies in place to guide charter school creation and oversight. Pertinent information is collected and shared using the Beating the Odds analysis and a comprehensive set of data is analyzed and shared with stakeholders using a variety of methods. The Beating the Odds outcomes are also used to identify best practices for educationally disadvantaged students and embedded in charter school oversight practices. (Page 34) An annual report is published to disseminate detailed outcomes about solely academic achievement. (Page 34) These practices and policies are likely to ensure pertinent information is collected for dissemination to key stakeholders. A particularly unique initiative is plan to utilize Between the Odds analysis to support efforts to disseminate information on best or promising practices including:
-- allowing traditional public schools identified with significant need to establish partnerships with successful charter schools
--provide a computer based tool to support charter and traditional public school partnerships
--mandated use of BTO outcomes in every charter school's performance contract

--determining which schools are most successful and in what areas.
--determining every school's area of growth. (Page 34)
--sharing resources online, for trainings, materials, and videos
--identifying schools that are successful with educationally disadvantaged students and feature these schools in online training opportunities. (Page 35)

A weighted lottery is used to support increased diversity in charter schools and ensure access to educationally disadvantaged populations. Lottery weights are determined through a variety of indicators including stakeholder surveys, and school data. (page 36) This initiative is likely to increase student body diversity in charter schools statewide.

The state has a solid proposal to use dissemination grant awards to build awareness of charter schools that supports efforts to increase the number of high quality charter schools in the state. Strategies include:
--additional focus on charter schools working with educationally disadvantaged students.
--award 2 subgrants to charter schools with a track record of success working with urban and rural educationally disadvantaged students
--award 1 dissemination grant to a charter school with a track record of success in targeted areas
--disseminate best practices with schools throughout the state
--allow additional subgrant points for charter schools working with targeted student populations
--provide public outreach via webinar
--require subgrantees the autonomy to identify and implement site based performance measures (Page 37)

Weaknesses:

The applicant proposes a single process to disseminate information on best or promising practices in charter schools. This effort lacks a process to ensure information is shared with pertinent stakeholders. The proposal would be improved in this area with the addition of a summary of multiple strategies and formats that will ensure access to information on promising charter school practices for a disparate group of stakeholders. A solid response would consider outreach to include families, authorizers, charter schools, developers, and community partners. Strong strategies would extend beyond computer based formats and may include face-to-face community events and a variety of informative print material.

The applicant does not provide information on student discipline and school climate.

Reader's Score: 9

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 proposal indicates the state will use CSP funds to support efforts to meet the needs of educationally disadvantaged students and also plans to use CSP funds to increase the number charter schools that have a track record of success with the targeted student population. (Page 38-39)

The applicant describes a rigorous monitoring and review a process expected to take place throughout the grant cycle. The plan includes annual operational and academic reviews and renewal evaluations during year 2 and 4 of the charter contract. This process is likely to ensure appropriate oversight of state authorizing entities. (page 39)

The renewal process is appropriately rigorous and clearly indicates that academic goals are one of the most important factors in renewal decisions and requires locally operated charters to show progress that exceed traditional public schools state wide. This monitoring effort clearly supports efforts to sustain high quality in state charter schools and sets a solid foundation to determine charter school revocation or renewal. (Page 38)

The applicant plans to support charter school autonomy while holding charter schools accountable for results and meeting the terms of their charters or performance contracts. Each charter school will be mandated to submit annual reports and undergo annual audits both of which will be used to evaluate regional school board charter school portfolios. This indicates a robust plan that is likely to lead to solid evaluation of both charter schools and the authorizing agencies during the grant cycle. (Page 40)

Weaknesses:

The proposal lacks a clear description of how the SEA will seek and approve petitions from developers who have the capacity to create charter schools that can become high-quality charter schools.

The response does not clearly address how funding will be used to identify and utilize models and practices to serve the targeted student population. The application in this area would be improved with the addition of details on the strategies expected to be used to support objectives in this area.

The ways in which the state will establish measurable academic and operational performance expectations for all state charter schools is not clearly articulated. The response in this area would be improved with the addition of specific objectives, strategies, and supports to insure a rigorous process is in place to meet the goals in this area.

Reader's Score: 11

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 proposal includes a comprehensive logic model that utilizes 4 key objectives to meet SEA goals to establish and sustain high quality charter schools that serve the educationally disadvantaged students. The logic model aligns with the Management Plan and is likely to ensure appropriate oversight of the project throughout the grant cycle. Significant objectives are:
   1. To increase the number of high quality charter schools, in Georgia, especially among underserved students in rural and urban settings.
   2. To use Charter School Program grant funding to improve student outcomes, specifically for educationally disadvantaged students.
   3. To monitor charter schools' fiscal health, compliance with IDEA, anti discrimination laws, and to provide support to ensure long term compliance.
   4. To promote awareness of high quality chartering best practices to teachers, parents, communities, and other public schools. (page 40)

   The logic model provided in the narrative is in keeping with federal guidelines (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) and includes 3 components to guide the SEA chartering model including:
   --Process
   --Performance Measures
   --Input/Output Activities
   --Expected Outcomes and Impact over time

   The logic model is appropriately cohesive and is likely to align charter school programming initiatives to state wide

objectives. (Page 41) The theory of action addresses the role of the grant in promoting the State-level strategy for using charter schools to improve educational outcomes for students within the targeted population. Additionally, the plan will utilize the subgrants to ensure high quality charter school replication (Pages 42-49) This solid set of initiatives and strategies indicate a solid, comprehensive plan of action and ensure the likelihood of meeting project objectives.

The management plan adequately addresses the objectives and includes expected outcomes and impacts over time. The impacts are expected to support state goals to increase charter school choice in the state. Based on this, project performance measures indicate a high level of support for the SEA's specific performance objectives. (page 43)

Weaknesses:

The proposal does not clearly address the state response to compliance issues or findings related to the CSP that are identified in an audit or other monitoring review. A solid response in this area would include a description of consequences or initiatives, such as mandated training or additional reporting, that responds to needs of struggling schools

Reader's Score: 8

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 overall project design includes plans to utilize funding to implement a variety of strategies. The plan is robust and appears likely to support goals to increase the number of quality charters in the state. Strategies include:
--hiring additional charter school staff members to increase the fiscal oversight and monitoring of all charter schools
--providing technical assistance to schools on pertinent issues such as student performance, management and oversight
--providing planning and implementation grants
--encouraging charter schools to open in under resourced communities
--highlight programs that target educationally disadvantaged populations
--encourage quality charter school replication (page 51).

The applicant provides a chart that provides data indicating reasonable targets are in place for awarding implementation grants and dissemination subgrants. The narrative also indicates a comprehensive grantee selection process is in place and provides details of expected allocations and the grant competition process for disbursing subgrant funds. (Page 53)

On page 55 the candidate requests a waiver for substantial expansion noting it would allow for opportunities to increase charter enrollment in successful charters and expand access to educationally disadvantaged populations.

Weaknesses:

The proposal lacks detail to describe 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.

The application does not provide detail within the monitoring timeline beyond the first four months.

In the past, the state awarded grants based on complete applications as opposed to rigorous review. Due to this the overall quality of the applicant pool is questionable for that grant cycle.

The applicant received a CSP grant in the past, but did not provide information on the percentage of eligible subgrants or the impact of the funding to meet the stated grant requirements.

Reader's Score: 7

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:

The applicant describes specific strategies embedded in the state statute intended to support high quality authorizing and management, (Page 8), including:
--mandated charter board training (S.S. O.C.G.A SS20-2-2065(1), and SBOE Rule 160-4-9.06 (2014).
--annual reporting (O.C.G.A S.S. 20-2-20671.1)
Mandated laws increase the likelihood of appropriate implementation of state chartering efforts, thus, these statutes bolster the likelihood that the SEA goals to create and maintain high quality charter schools will be met.

The application indicates the state rules and guidelines have been changed to increase oversight. The process to support this includes the evaluation of local education boards to measure and benchmark local charter school portfolios. These modified rules and guidelines are intended to “hold local boards of education accountable.” and are likely to ensure rigorous monitoring of the authorizing entities. (Page 9)

The applicant provided a comprehensive summary of the state’s charter authorizing process. (pp 9-10) It is evident that criteria are in place to provide rigorous evaluation of charter applications using a multi-tiered review including:
--Both the state and local agencies can approve charters
--Letter of Intent to local education board
--Rubric measurement of the charter application from the state charter authority
--Legal compliance review
--Clearance panel review with the school’s governing board
--Applicant grouping based on application and panel review outcomes
--A “clarification group” that provides an opportunity to revise applications prior to final approval

The applicant utilizes a “fast track expansion model” page 11 for high performing school replication. Included in the narrative is an example of a successful school, The Kindezi School, whose approval for expansion to a second campus was expedited in half the normal time frame. The narrative and evidence indicate the framework includes a rigorous, differentiated process in place to support the creation of high quality charter schools.

Weaknesses:

There is no indication of mandated on-site visits prior to charter schools beginning operations. A strong response in this area would include a brief description and evidence to ensure a pre-operational on-site review is embedded in the monitoring process.

The process to rank local boards according to their effectiveness as charter school authorization entities has yet to be implemented. Due to this, it is difficult to determine the efficacy or probable effectiveness of this monitoring process. (page 9)

The applicant states that there is a probation process in place for local boards, but fails to provide details, such as the probationary timelines and specific restrictions. (Page 9)

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:

   The applicant meets the criteria for competitive preference in this area by providing an appeal process for applicants whose charter requests have been denied.

   The narrative describes a non-LEA State Charter Schools Committee which serves as an independent authorizer (page 11). It is the function of this seven panel public chartering board to review denied charter applications. Charter school candidates who are denied at the local level can have the rejected application appeal overridden by this committee.

   Schools authorized by the State Charter Schools Committee panel function as independent Local Education Agencies.

   The State Charter Schools Committee decisions can be overridden by the State Board of Education and charter applicants can bring applications denied by local school boards to the State Board of Education for reconsideration as a Special School. (page. 12) These elements appear appropriate to assure equity in the charter school application process.

   Weaknesses:

   There are no weaknesses apparent in this section.

Reader's Score: **5**

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