

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

Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Louisiana Department of Education (U282A150005)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
State-Level Strategy		
1. State-Level Strategy	15	13
Sub Total	15	13
Selection Criteria		
Policy Context for Charter Schools		
1. Policy Context	5	4
Sub Total	5	4
Selection Criteria		
Past Performance		
1. Past Performance	10	8
Quality of Plan to Support Ed. Dis. Students		
1. Ed. Dis. Students	15	8
Vision for Growth and Accountability		
1. Growth and Accountability	10	7
Dissemination of Information and Best Practices		
1. Dissemination	10	8
Oversight of Public Chartering Agencies		
1. Oversight of Authorizers	15	11
Management Plan and Theory of Action		
1. Management Plan	10	9
Project Design		
1. Project Design	10	8
Sub Total	80	59
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
High-Quality Authorizing and Monitoring Processes		
1. CPP 1	15	14
Sub Total	15	14
Competitive Preference Priority		
Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process		

1. CPP 2

	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Total	120	95

Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - SEA Panel - 3: 84.282A

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Louisiana Department of Education (U282A150005)

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:

Louisiana's CSP activities are/will be integrated within its statewide plan, Louisiana Believes, described on pages 10-13.

The Louisiana Department of Education's Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) mandates that all Louisiana charter schools receive per-pupil funding "equal to no less than the per pupil amount received by the school district in which the charter school is located" (page 13).

Louisiana evaluates each charter school applicant's ability to collaborate with local stakeholders, and the application presents evidence in multiple locations regarding the state's encouragement of local strategies for improving student achievement involving charter schools.

Weaknesses:

The content makes reference to the state's statewide plan to improve student academic achievement and close attainment gaps, but could have gone into more granular detail regarding the specifics of its approach in these areas. Having more detail would have made it easier to evaluate the extent to which the SEA's CSP activities are integrated within its approach.

The application indicates that the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) "will prioritize CSP applications from charter schools that would either open or share best practices with charter schools in communities where children are limited to low-performing options" (page 14). It is unclear the extent to which this has been the state's past practice, versus a future-focused commitment it is making in this grant application.

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:

Louisiana law, provides charter schools with substantial flexibility and autonomy, as specified in the R.S. 17:3996 appendix of the application, which also identifies the extent to which charter schools are exempt from State or local rules.

The state currently includes charter schools in all public school mailings and program notices regarding state and federal funding sources, and has committed in the application to notify charter schools of all relevant opportunities through multiple mechanisms (email, online).

The state's Division of Education Finance uses "approved allocation methods" (pg. 18) to ensure that charter schools receive "their commensurate share of federal funds and state funds" and undertakes audits to ensure that federal funds have been allocated properly.

All charter schools must currently comply with state special education laws and meet "an at-risk status requirement for serving educationally disadvantaged students..."

Weaknesses:

The application does not address explicitly how the Division of Education Finance ensures that charters receive funds "in a timely fashion."

The application states that "the LDE will implement multiple strategies to guarantee that charter schools adequately serve and comply with all IDEA, 504, title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and title IX..." The strategies are not detailed, and it is unclear from the application the specific extent to which the LDE has to date implemented such strategies.

Reader's Score: 4

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:

Based on its own definition of "high quality," LDE presented data showing an increase in the number of high-quality charter schools in three of the last five years (11-12, 13-14 and 14-15) and an increase in the percentage of high-quality charter schools in two of the last five years (11-12 and 13-14).

As discussed on pages 19 and 20, research undertaken by Stanford in 2013 showed that students in Louisiana charter schools on average experienced greater gains in reading and math than students in traditional public schools.

Weaknesses:

Based on its own definition of "academically poor performing," LDE presented data showing a decrease in the number of academically poor performing charter schools in only one of the last five years (13-14) and a decrease in the percentage of academically poor performing in only one of the last five years (13-14).

The state does not provide "a written explanation of how the (LDE's) proposed definition (of "high-quality") is at least as rigorous as the standard in paragraph (a) of the definition of high-quality charter school set forth in the Definitions section of this notice." Similarly, the state does not provide "a written explanation of how the (LDE's) proposed definition (of "academically poor-performing") is at least as rigorous as the standard in paragraph (a) of the definition of academically poor-performing charter school set forth in the Definitions section of this notice."

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:

The LDE proposes to use grant funds to implement subgrant programs designed to replicate charter schools with a track record of success serving educationally disadvantaged students and to help successful schools share best practices with other schools.

The LDE holds all BESE-authorized charter schools accountable, and the application indicates that BESE has recently revoked a school's charter due to its failure to serve special education students.

The LDE proposes to implement a subgrant program with a specific goal of encouraging innovations designed to improve the achievement of educationally disadvantaged students.

Weaknesses:

The specifics of the LDE's plan to ensure that charters serve the needs of educationally disadvantaged students going forward are not articulated in the application.

It is not clear from the application how the LDE currently holds district-authorized charter schools and their district authorizers accountable for ensuring that they serve educationally disadvantaged students. It is more clear how the LDE currently holds BESE-authorized charter schools accountable.

The discussion does not explicitly address the quality of the plan for monitoring charter schools to ensure compliance with Federal and State laws related to educationally disadvantaged students.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Vision for Growth and Accountability

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

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

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

3) The ambitiousness, quality of vision, and feasibility of the SEA' s plan (including key actions) to

support the closure of academically poor-performing charter schools in the State (i.e., through revocation, non-renewal, or voluntary termination of a charter) during the project period.

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

Strengths:

The LDE has a well-established "School Report Card" process used to collect, summarize and share performance data on every Louisiana public school and to help schools identify and address their areas of improvement.

The LDE has identified a goal to facilitate the launch of "at least forty new high-quality charter schools, including ten new non-RSD high quality charter schools per year in Louisiana" (sic) over the three year project period. As support for this goal, the LDE indicates that it is "consistent with historical precedent in Louisiana" (pg. 28).

The LDE cites its past history of closing 25 academically low-performing charter schools "through either BESE action or voluntary termination" as evidence of its commitment to reducing the number of academically poor-performing charter schools.

Weaknesses:

The application does not identify a specific plan to support the closure of academically poor-performing charter schools during the project period.

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - Dissemination of Information and Best Practices

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

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

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

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

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

Strengths:

The application establishes that the LDE has historically played a leadership role for identifying and disseminating research about best practices in successful charter schools, and will use CSP-funded dissemination projects going forward to continue to distribute best practice information with charter schools and developers.

Best practices in serving economically disadvantaged students will be a major focus area of the abovementioned dissemination project/subgrant work (pages 31 and 33).

Best practices in student discipline and school climate practices will also be a major focus of the abovementioned dissemination project/subgrant work (page 32).

Weaknesses:

The state only partially addressed factor 4 in the proposal. Specifically, the state did not address the likelihood that its CSP-funded dissemination activities will increase the number of high-quality charter schools and contribute to improved student academic achievement.

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 LDE annually develops a rigorous application as a strategy to ensure that all authorizers are utilizing "a high-quality common charter application process."

The application clearly establishes the LDE's commitment to establishing measurable academic and operational performance expectations for all charter schools.

Prior sections of the application have established that the LDE has a well-established process for monitoring and reporting on the performance of charter schools on an annual basis that it will continue to utilize going forward.

Weaknesses:

The LDE did not address how it proactively works with authorizers to ensure that they are effectively monitoring the performance of their charter schools, or what actions they take when they identify deficiencies in an authorizer's performance.

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 LDE's application includes a logic model which addresses the role of the CSP grant in promoting the State's strategy to use charter schools to improve educational outcomes.

LDE's application includes detailed project-specific performance measures, with baseline data (where available), performance targets, and the method identified for collecting necessary data, supporting the logic model.

The activities supporting the implementation of the logic model appear adequate to achieve the stated project objectives within the project period.

Weaknesses:

LDE's application did not clearly outline the timeline(s) and milestones associated with key project tasks.

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

The application identifies the results from the LDE's past grant, with information indicating some level of success ("subgrantees include 21 out of 24 charter schools within the jurisdiction of the RSD that are no longer in turnaround status and are no longer failing").

The application provides detailed information on the process the LDE will follow for ongoing fiscal and programmatic monitoring (pages 53-56).

The application outlines the LDE's intent to prioritize subgrant applications that improve charter school performance in districts with "D" and "F" letter grades, support the replication of high quality charter schools and their dissemination of their best practices, and support the achievement of educationally disadvantaged students (pages 55-56).

Weaknesses:

The application does not address how the SEA will create a portfolio of subgrantee that focuses on areas of need within with state and how this aligns with the state-level strategy.

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:

Louisiana's Charter School Performance Compact (CSPC) provides a framework and outlines the process for a rigorous review of the performance of charter schools throughout the state. This framework encompasses all of the elements outlined in the Competitive Preference Priority 1(a)(1-5).

As shown on page 6 of the Bulletin 126 attachment, Louisiana law outlines clear and specific standards and processes for measuring the performance of authorized public chartering agencies and establishes the process and criteria for renewal and non-renewal of authorizer certification.

As shown in the Louisiana Believes Request for Applications attachment, Louisiana has outlined an authorizing process (encompassing a common application) that establishes clear criteria for evaluating charter applications.

Per the abovementioned attachment, Louisiana has separate applications for new and established charters and specific criteria for assessing the past performance of established operators.

Weaknesses:

The content did not clearly address factor A(3)(c) (demonstrated fidelity to the terms of the charter or performance contract and applicable law).

Reader's Score: 14

Competitive Preference Priority - Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process

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

To meet this priority, the applicant must demonstrate that the State--

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

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

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

Strengths:

Louisiana Law allows for three types of authorizers – the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), local school boards and local charter authorizers. As such, Louisiana's authorizing structure meets factor (a) of this criterion.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

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Applicant: Louisiana Department of Education (U282A150005)

Reader #2: *****

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Sub Total	15	15
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1. CPP 2

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Sub Total	5	5
Total	120	107

Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - SEA Panel - 3: 84.282A

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Louisiana Department of Education (U282A150005)

Questions

Selection Criteria - State-Level Strategy

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

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

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

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

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

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

Strengths:

The applicant shares that charter schools have played a pivotal role in raising the achievement levels in Louisiana schools and have improved educational outcomes for over 70,000 students. (p. 10)

Louisiana states they are committed to lead and support innovation, personalization, and flexibility to create the options necessary, especially for educationally disadvantaged students. The overall focus of their strategy is to improve student academic achievement and attainment in all students and to have students graduate prepared for success in college, careers, and citizenship.

Creating multiple and varied pathways for students and families to attain an education is a part of their state strategy. (p. 10)

Plans incorporate improvement and innovations into new and existing systems of school improvement and innovation efforts to invigorate the charter efforts. They anticipate leveraging the lessons learned in charter schools to drive improvement in public schools.

Their project objectives and logic model include high school graduation rates, postsecondary education enrollment rates and closing achievement and attainment gaps. (p.10)

The applicant identifies subgrants that will award competitive priority points to those that propose to establish charter schools which are physically located within the attendance zone of one of the state's lowest performing schools. This would be a part of the State plan to create charters that are viable options for students in the lowest performing schools.

Research conducted in Louisiana also shows that students attending charter schools have experienced gains equivalent to two months of added learning time and reading and three months in math. Taking the successes from their past experience, they propose to build even more high-quality charter schools to serve Louisiana's educational disadvantaged students and disseminate best practices.

The applicant shares information about Louisiana Believes, the statewide plan to improve student academic achievement and attainment. Within this vision, charter schools are an ever-present strategy for implementing their vision. The strategy centers on setting high expectations, ensuring accountability for student performance, providing educators with support, assure equitable resources, and share best practices to deliver an excellent education. Their vision for the parents to be empowered to choose the school that will best prepare their child for college and career success and provide the ability to move from a poor performing school is a powerful focus.

Their commitment to high expectations means adoption of nationally recognized rigorous college and career ready academic ELA and Mathematics content standards. They are also transitioning the state definition of proficiency from "Basic" to "Mastery" by 2025 thus showing a rigorous and ambitious commitment to high quality.

The applicant gives multiple examples of Louisiana leveraging the successful experience of their teachers and leaders of charter schools to serve as mentors and trainers to schools not in the high-performing range of schools. Their actions communicate a clear expectation that all schools will be high quality schools, and if there are issues, they will be addressed with support and financial incentive.

The applicant discusses the effort to define student achievement and attainment of performance expectations and by what means these results are measured. The LDE's district and state accountability system assigns letter grades based on calculated school performance score. This score includes proficiency on state assessments, the cohort graduation rate, and the graduation index, which rewards achievements like AP exam credit, advanced workforce credentials, and process points for meaningful growth of non-proficient students. Looking at a variety of factors in determining school ratings is a powerful strategy as it demonstrates to educators that the system sees the multitude of ways to assess progress.

The application shows a process whereby charter school applicants seeking to open schools in districts that receive a D or F rating can bypass the district application process and submit an application directly to the LDE to prevent students from losing time on much needed instruction. They also have included a process where charter organizers with a strong demonstrated track record of improving student achievement may submit a single application that includes a growth plan for multiple school over multiple years, as well as replicate charters automatically without submitting a new application.

Equitable financing and facilities are provided in the application from Louisiana. The money flows directly to the site and follows students, not the system. Schools receive per-pupil funding equal to no less than the per pupil amount received by the school district. The legislature also passed extra funding revenue to address per pupil funds from local revenue estimates and local taxes as well as funds to offset private facility costs.

The application from Louisiana provides many examples to illustrate the points they are making, thus providing a clear and comprehensive narrative of the goals and strategies as well as the impact of these strategies.

Weaknesses:

The grant would be strengthened with more specificity about the State Strategy and how all the pieces fit together to create an improved program for student who are disadvantaged learners. There is much mention of innovative programs and it would be helpful to define innovative and give some examples of what they identify as innovative.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Policy Context for Charter Schools

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Strengths:

The charter school law for Louisiana provides a great deal of flexibility in charter schools around governance, budgets, expenditures, personnel and student policies, and a multitude of other exemptions listed in their Revised Statutes. Clear language exists exempting charters from all state board rules and regulations and any local board rules and regulations. The exceptions involve open meetings law, health and safety issues, and other issues that are present in charter school law.

The applicant identifies that the autonomy and freedom from constrictive rules is at the heart of the charter school movement and while wanting charters to use regularly accepted business practices, charters are free to develop and implement creative and innovative governance, educational and management models that may be context specific, and to use their budget to create an excellent school.

The application provides thorough details of how charter schools will be notified of potential funding sources and federal or state grants to support their growth and development. Various structures exist including team meetings, news briefs, web pages, and connection to the Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools.

The applicant shares that the offices of finance at the state and local level have access to allocation amounts of both federal and state dollars and a complete list of all charters. Their goal is to make sure set asides are based on student enrollment count or the individual needs of their students. Regular audits also occur to assure proper allocation of funds demonstrating the commitment to distribute funds equally and fairly.

Louisiana law states that all charter schools shall be considered the LEA for funding purposes and statutory definitions. All charters are treated in the same manner as all other public schools when working with federal funds to those schools and services to children with disabilities.

The applicant shares that all charter schools are required by law to serve educationally disadvantaged students and that they must maintain an at-risk student populations that is equal to the percentage of the district where the charter school resides.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses seen.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Past Performance

1. **The Secretary considers the past performance of charter schools in a State that enacted a charter school law for the first time five or more years before submission of its application. In determining the past performance of charter schools in such a State, the Secretary considers the following factors:**
 - 1) **The extent to which there has been a demonstrated increase, for each of the past five years, in the number and percentage of high-quality charter schools (as defined in this notice) in the State;**
 - 2) **The extent to which there has been a demonstrated reduction, for each of the past five years, in the number and percentage of academically poor-performing charter schools (as defined in this notice) in the State; and**
 - 3) **Whether, and the extent to which, the academic achievement and academic attainment (including high school graduation rates and college and other postsecondary education enrollment rates) of charter school students equal or exceed the academic achievement and academic attainment of similar students in other public schools in the State over the past five years.**

Strengths:

The applicant provides multiple data sources and examples of the successes in their charter schools over the past years. Studies by CREDO validated the earlier mentioned significant gains in reading and mathematics. The history behind the charter schools efforts, though tragic, provided an opportunity to revamp schooling and charter schools played a critical role in turning around New Orleans student achievement and now the state.

The applicant shares that 91% of all schools in in New Orleans are charter school and the Recovery School District is the first major school district to become composed entire of charter schools. The CREDO study significantly points out that African American students that both live in poverty and attend a New Orleans charter school experienced an equivalent to 72 more days of learning in reading and 94 more days in math.

The Louisiana charter school programs absolutely outperform other schools and districts in the state. They currently have 6 academically low performing schools out of 134 total, and 30 categorized as high-quality. What is significant is that prior to Hurricane Katrina, over 62% of students in New Orleans attended failing schools. Today the number has been reduced to 7%. Furthermore, the percentage of high school graduates who graduating on time has grown from 56% to 73% in 2014.

Weaknesses:

The application on page 21 shows increases beginning to show in the last three years. High quality schools have increased slightly. It is concerning that that the poor performing schools have stayed consistence and in fact had an extreme increase in 2013-2014.

There is no information shared on high school attainment and college enrollment with comparison to the public schools system.

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 states that there are three ways the LDE supports educationally disadvantaged students: 1) they hold authorizers accountable for authorizing charter schools that meet demonstrable student needs and for including any breeches in state or federal law when making high-stakes decisions such as charter renewal; 2) by holding state-authorized charter schools accountable for meeting state mandated at-risk requirements and for avoiding or if necessary quickly resolving and state or federal compliance violations; and 3) supporting the spread of research based best practices serving educationally disadvantaged student to ensure model employed by all charter school include those best practices. (p`22) These clear and high stakes expectations show strong commitment to supporting these students.

The applicant identifies in the management plan and theory of action how LDE will increase achievement and reduce achievement gaps for educationally disadvantaged students. A key component of the LDE strategy is effective use of outstanding educators and successful, replicable models. Through dissemination of positive results, the teaching force and school leadership will see what is working in their own backyard.

Coupled with this dissemination effort is the expectation that once seen or learned, these practices will show up in other schools; and, in fact, follow up visits are scheduled to assure that this practice happens. In this way, the application supports and encourages innovative practices.

The applicant details that they will award dissemination grants and planning and implementation grants through a competitive process with a focus on serving and improving learning for educationally disadvantaged students. Accountability, inspection, and action are present in all the initiatives they are undertaking around charter schools.

The application states that multiple strategies are used to attract and retain educationally disadvantaged students equitably and meaningfully including requiring charter authorizers to deny granting a charter to applicants that do not outline strategies and methods needed to equitably enroll educationally disadvantaged students and to include competitive priorities in the subgrant competition.

Weaknesses:

The application could be strengthened by identifying more ambitious goals of improvement for low performing schools. Stating on page. 14 that a goal is to move the bottom five percent into high quality charter schools seems to not take into account the urgency of change needed for our 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 applicant shares that the LDE commitment to rigorous accountability for charter schools starts with objective evaluation of charter school performance against clear, data-driven performance metrics. (p.26) LDE will annually continue to publish School Report Cards and include all charter schools. Accountability shows up as these reports share a thorough overview of each school and their achievement including test scores, graduation rates, subgroup disaggregation, information on specific educationally disadvantaged student populations, and more.

As Louisiana experiences the educational successes post Katrina, charter schools play a critical role in the recovery process and long-term vision for the state. Expanding and supporting charter schools is a key strategy for continuing to address educationally disadvantaged students and close the achievement gap. As such, LDE will plan to open 40 new high-quality charter schools, including 10 new non RSD high-quality charter schools per year in Louisiana. This effort demonstrates the ability to replicate the model throughout the state.

The LDE has a demonstrated track record of closing non-performing charter schools. Additionally, they often take the failing schools and bring in a successful model to offer the students currently attending. They demonstrate innovative, ambitious, and gutsy actions

Weaknesses

Very few schools appear to be closed as shown in the application on p. 28 and 29. With such high numbers and such issues with low performing schools, it would appear to be more ambitious to close or restart more charters to provide

for a rigorous academic program.

Question Status: Not Completed

Reviewer Score: 9

Selection Criteria - Dissemination of Information and Best Practices

6. 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 SEAs plan to disseminate information about charter schools and best or promising practices of successful charter schools, the Secretary considers the following factors:

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

Strengths

The applicant shows that the LDE is a critical player in the dissemination of successful and best practices for charter developers, charter schools, and authorizers. They have developed toolboxes for schools, district, and charter developers that include charter applications with a tutorial, a revenue projection model, relevant data and regulations, and more. This example shows explicitly the efforts and innovative approach they have to encouraging the growth of charter schools.

LDE has prepared content-specific guidebooks and training materials to prepare educators for the shift to higher standards, taught directly to educators at statewide teacher-leader conferences. Along with conference, charter school forums are held where best practices are shared with charter developers, New Orleans charter schools, and other charter schools statewide.

Projects have been designed that will be funded with VSP funds as they support research that has already been conducted. These efforts are designed to hold best practice workshops where high-quality charter school staff share with other charter schools practices for serving educationally disadvantaged students, such as special needs students. As Louisiana serves a disproportionately high rate of educationally disadvantaged students, this effort is an effective strategy.

The design of the second model is quite innovative in that a high-quality charter will work with teaching charter developers their best practices such as how to implement evidence-based school models, and then evaluate charter developers' implementation of best practices in pilot programs, such as summer programs and after school programs that developers will run in order to ensure that they have mastered best practices before submitting a charter petitions.

The dissemination efforts all provide further learning opportunities both for the presenters and leaders as well as the receivers of the information and trainings. The LDE plans to collect data, develop rubrics of best practices, and further refine their efforts to boost student achievement.

Weaknesses:

Very few schools appear to be closed as shown in the application on p. 28 and 29. With such high numbers and such issues with low performing schools, it would appear to be more ambitious to close or restart more charters to provide for a rigorous academic program.

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 applicant shows that the LDE is a critical player in the dissemination of successful and best practices for charter developers, charter schools, and authorizers. They have developed toolboxes for schools, district, and charter developers that include charter applications with a tutorial, a revenue projection model, relevant data and regulations, and more. This example shows explicitly the efforts and innovative approach they have to encouraging the growth of charter schools.

LDE has prepared content-specific guidebooks and training materials to prepare educators for the shift to higher standards, taught directly to educators at statewide teacher-leader conferences. Along with conference, charter school forums are held where best practices are shared with charter developers, New Orleans charter schools, and other charter schools statewide.

Projects have been designed that will be funded with VSP funds as they support research that has already been conducted. These efforts are designed to hold best practice workshops where high-quality charter school staff share with other charter schools practices for serving educationally disadvantaged students, such as special needs students. As Louisiana serves a disproportionately high rate of educationally disadvantaged students, this effort is an effective strategy.

The design of the second model is quite innovative in that a high-quality charter will work with teaching charter developers their best practices such as how to implement evidence-based school models, and then evaluate charter developers' implementation of best practices in pilot programs, such as summer programs and after school programs that developers will run in order to ensure that they have mastered best practices before submitting a charter petitions.

The dissemination efforts all provide further learning opportunities both for the presenters and leaders as well as the receivers of the information and trainings. The LDE plans to collect data, develop rubrics of best practices, and further refine their efforts to boost student achievement.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses seen.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Oversight of Public Chartering Agencies

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

Strengths:

The design of the dissemination model is quite innovative in that a high-quality charter will work with teaching charter developers their best practices such as how to implement evidence-based school models, and then evaluate charter developers' implementation of best practices in pilot programs, such as summer programs and after school programs that developers will run in order to ensure that they have mastered best practices before submitting a charter petitions.

The dissemination efforts all provide further learning opportunities both for the presenters and leaders as well as the receivers of the information and trainings. The LDE plans to collect data, develop rubrics of best practices, and further refine their efforts to boost student achievement.

The applicant shares information about a partnership created with an early learning center where they opened a center within the charter providing choice for parents and their children. Working with Head Start they created a high quality early learning environment fostering parent choice.

Weaknesses:

There is no information shared about how the state will entice charter operators from out of state or who are new to the area to become involved in the charter school system and bring in innovative practices.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Management Plan and Theory of Action

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

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

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

3) The adequacy of the management plan to --

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

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

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

Strengths:

The applicant provides a management plan and theory of action with the intent to demonstrate how they will increase the number of charter school authorizers, charter schools, strengthen the charter school pipeline with high-quality charters, and provide opportunities for high quality charters to support their peers to grow. (p. 38)

The logic model is clear and makes solid connections with resources, activities, outputs, short-, mid-, and long-term goals. Their focus on increasing high quality authorizers of charter schools is an innovative focus as many educators focus on the schools, not the organizers. The LDE established performance measure to track progress on their three identified outcomes as seen on p. 40.

Required elements are present in the logic model. The LDE has developed project specific performance measures to track progress toward achieving the three outcomes identified in the logic model.

The management plan provides clear month by month details about the activities occurring in the grant plan. Information is shared about who will be doing what.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses seen.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Project Design

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

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

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

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

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

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

2) The process for monitoring CSP subgrantees;

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

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

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

Strengths:

Clear indicators and timelines are present along with name of staff responsible for overseeing the processes. The plan also includes details about the 44 sub grants and their timelines, selection criteria and other important indicators for carrying out their project.

The application identifies a portfolio created by the SEA 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;

The applicant identifies clear methods of communication throughout the grant whereby community members, parents and staff are informed of charter school grants, processes and opportunities.

Weaknesses:

No mention is made of efforts to increase the student body diversity or maintain a high level of student body diversity in the application. Sharing strategies on this effort would strengthen the application.

Reader's Score: 8

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Strengths:

The applicant identifies Louisiana charter school law which states there are three types of authorizers of charter schools: the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the local school boards, and local charter authorizers. Anyone who authorizes a charter school is responsible for regularly scheduled reviews and oversight of the charter's stated goals and objectives. Clear academic, financial, legal and organizational requirements are shared with groups seeking to start or expand a charter school.

The charter schools are required to provide regular reports to the authorizing agency that include test scores, learning gains, financial updates and organizational issues. These reports provide the authorizers the ability to keep an eye on the pulse of the school. A major assessment occurs in the third year and the results of that assessment are shared publicly. Louisiana clearly identifies processes for revoking a charter if the school fails to meet the high expectations or clearly demonstrates their ability to improve with the support and technical assistance provided.

Extensive details are provided around the process for charter school applications. The applicant shares that a common charter application is used by all charter authorizers in the state. Additionally, processes have been incorporated in the charter process that allows the state to authorize existing charter operators that have a clear demonstrated record of success. It is clear the state is serious about continuing the positive results and upping the bar as they learn the lessons of successful practices to close the achievement gap.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses seen

Reader's Score: 15

Competitive Preference Priority - Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process

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

To meet this priority, the applicant must demonstrate that the State--

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

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

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

Strengths:

The applicant states that action was taken to implement regulatory requirements that established that all charter schools shall be subject to annual financial audits and requires that all charter schools must implement regulatory requirements that must be met in the operation of the school. Included in this legislation is the establishment of procedures for oversight and monitoring of all charter schools as well as the ability to amend, renew, and revoke charters.

Legislation was also passed stating that all charter schools must improve pupil learning, increase learning opportunities and access to quality education for all students, and that demonstrable improvements in student performance over the

term of its charter are also required. This law is one of the most rigorous viewed in that failure to grow can be cause for revocation of the charter. Louisiana states in no uncertain terms that they are using charters to continue the progress they have seen in improving student learning.

Louisiana state law provides for multiple charter school authorizers including the local school districts. (p.9) They also have classifications for charter schools identifying the type of charter and the purpose it is serving. The applicant reports that 48% of all charters were failing and thus taken over by the state under the Recovery School District.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses seen

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/31/2015 02:24 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/06/2015 04:45 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Louisiana Department of Education (U282A150005)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
State-Level Strategy		
1. State-Level Strategy	15	11
Sub Total	15	11
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	6
Oversight of Public Chartering Agencies		
1. Oversight of Authorizers	15	11
Management Plan and Theory of Action		
1. Management Plan	10	10
Project Design		
1. Project Design	10	8
Sub Total	80	63
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
High-Quality Authorizing and Monitoring Processes		
1. CPP 1	15	15
Sub Total	15	15
Competitive Preference Priority		
Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process		

1. CPP 2

	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Total	120	99

Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - SEA Panel - 3: 84.282A

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Louisiana Department of Education (U282A150005)

Questions

Selection Criteria - State-Level Strategy

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

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

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

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

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

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

Strengths:

The applicant clearly outlines a plan that incorporates charters into the SEA's statewide strategy.

Applicant has a clear focus on identifying, supporting and disseminating best practices of charters w/ other charters and public schools.

There is mandated equitable funding for charters per state law.

Applicant prioritizes CSP applications (sub-grants) in communities where children are limited to low-performing school options.

Weaknesses:

The subgrant program discusses replicating best practices via workshops & dissemination but doesn't get into specific strategies for closing achievement/attainment gaps.

There is no mention of encouraging charters to collaborate with providers of early learning or alternative education programs.

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:

Applicant has included strong autonomy provisions for charter schools in their charter school law, including budget, governance, personnel and student policies.

Applicant is proactive about informing charters in the state about federal funding opportunities

Applicant has strong provisions in place 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)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses in this section.

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:

Applicant notes in a table on page 21 that the number of schools deemed high quality has been increasing steadily for the past 5 years, particularly in the past 3.

The same table indicates that on a percentage basis the number of academically poor performing schools is going down.

Applicant notes the percentage of students graduating on time has increased from 56% prior to 2005 to 73% in 2014.

Weaknesses:

On an absolute number level, the number of academically poor performing schools has stayed relatively consistent over the past 5 years.

Applicant did not include high school graduation rates and/or college or other postsecondary education enrollment rate data.

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:

The applicant plans to award 30 sub-grants specifically to charter schools with a track record of successfully serving educationally disadvantaged students.

State law requires charter schools enroll special needs and educationally disadvantaged students equal to the percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch in the district in which school is located.

Applicant plans to review at risk student enrollment of sub-grantees semi-annually.

Applicant plans to award 14 dissemination sub-grants for high quality charter schools to disseminate best practices.

Weaknesses:

Applicant, by noting (p 25) that "charter applicants that incorporate best practices from high-quality charter operators are more likely to meet LDE's evidence based charter approval standards" is inadvertently stifling innovation, which, this section seeks to encourage.

The goal articulated on page 22 (increased percent of students with disabilities in New Orleans that demonstrate proficiency on state assessments from 39 to 46% over three years) while laudable, is not very ambitious nor a significant improvement (10%+) over current state achievement levels.

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:

Applicant articulates a goal of seeking to facilitate the start of 40 new charter schools during the three year project period which is consistent with historical growth in the state.

Applicant is committed to identifying and closing low performing schools as noted by the 25 they have closed (or voluntarily surrendered their charter) over the past 10 years.

Weaknesses:

At the end of the 2014-2015 school year, only 1/2 of the academically low-performing schools closed. Given the previous tolerance for allowing a percentage of low-performing schools to stay open, the state lacks ambition and quality of vision in their plan for supporting the closure of academically poor-performing schools in the State.

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:

Applicant has already conducted research to identify the types of dissemination projects they will support with CSP funds.

Applicant will collect progress at four regular intervals throughout each dissemination project. Applicant will also look at summative data, for example, the extent to which charter applicants who have participated in best practice dissemination workshops are successful at petitioning for a charter.

Weaknesses:

Applicant does not make a convincing argument that their sub-grant program will increase the number of high quality charter schools in the state. They infer this, however, they do not provide convincing data or analysis backing up the inference. The applicant does not discuss how they will use data to identify such practices and assess the impact of its dissemination activities.

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:

Applicant requires authorizers to ensure their authorization practices are aligned with best practices.

Applicant requires authorizers monitor 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

Applicant annually reviews charter school academic, organizational and financial performance with each individual school to identify and discuss any performance deficiencies.

Applicant publishes an annual School report card for all schools that includes breakdowns of performance overall and for subgroups.

Weaknesses:

Applicant did not address criteria 1 in this section - seeking and approving charter school petitions from developers that have the capacity to create charter schools that can become high-quality charter schools.

Applicant did not address 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

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:

Applicant includes a coherent and cohesive logic model that addresses the role of the grant to use CSP subgrants to improve educational outcomes for students vis program design, implementation, dissemination, revolving loans and other strategies.

Applicant includes myriad performance measures that are quantifiable and support the logic model.

The proposed management plan appears to be achievable and includes a plan to address any compliance issues related to the CSP that are identified in an audit or other monitoring review.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses in this section.

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:

Applicant includes a detailed project design that outlines the application and peer review process, timelines, and a reasonable year by year estimate of the number of awards the applicant expects to award, along with assumptions upon which estimates are based.

Applicant notes it previously received a CSP grant and includes the percentage of eligible applicants who were awarded subgrants

Applicant includes detailed fiscal and programmatic monitoring plans.

Applicant outlines a communication plan to inform teachers, parents and communities about the charter school sub-grant program.

Weaknesses:

Applicant does not address how they will create a portfolio of sub-grantees 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;

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:

Applicant demonstrates they have frameworks and processes to evaluate the performance of charter schools on a regular basis that including:

- applicant outlines rigorous academic and operational performance expectations (including performance expectations related to financial management and equitable treatment of all students and applicants);

- applicant has 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

- Applicant requires annual reporting by authorized public chartering agencies to each of their authorized charter schools that summarizes the individual school's performance and compliance, and identifies any areas that need improvement.

- Applicant monitors and evaluates local charter authorizers compliance with the standards for quality charter school authorizing as promulgated by NACSA.

- Applicant details processes that include differentiated review of charter petitions and provides an option where existing operators with a track record of success can be authorized to open additional schools.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 15

Competitive Preference Priority - Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process

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

To meet this priority, the applicant must demonstrate that the State--

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

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

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

Strengths:

Applicant notes their state law provides for multiple charter school authorizers.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses in this section.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/06/2015 04:45 PM