

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/21/2013 08:33 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Innovative Schools Development Corporation (U282B130030)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Curriculum	15	13
2. Disadvantaged Students	3	1
3. Strategy for Achievement	15	13
4. Community Support	8	8
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Quality of Personnel	22	20
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	18	14
Quality of Project Design		
1. Performance Contract	16	15
2. Flexibility	3	3
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Competitive Priority 1		
1. Rural/SPED/ELL	4	4
Competitive Priority		
Competitive Priority 2		
1. Promoting Diversity	2	2
Competitive Priority 3		
1. Military Families	3	0
Total	109	93

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - Panel - 6: 84.282B

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Innovative Schools Development Corporation (U282B130030)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. I. Quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the quality of the educational program to be implemented by the proposed charter school, including how the program will enable all students to meet challenging State student academic achievement standards, the grade levels or ages of students to be served, and the curriculum and instructional practices to be used. If the curriculum and instructional practices have been successfully used in other schools operated or managed by the applicant, the Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the implementation of such practices and the academic results achieved.

Strengths:

The BPL design has a track-record of success with low-income students and other sub-populations that DE Met will serve with a 90% high school graduation rate and a 95% two-or-four year college acceptance rates (Page 18).

The use of LTI experiences (page 19) and personalization with each student receiving a PLP (Page 20) are solid strategies for actively engaging students in their learning while ensuring to meet their individual needs.

Perhaps the most promising element of the proposed instructional practice is the focus on building a powerful school culture (page 21), engaging parents to reinforce learning in the classroom (page 21) and focusing on meaningful and on-going teacher professional development (page 22).

The applicant also adopted a comprehensive wrap-around curriculum that reinforces core academic areas (pages 23-25) while providing enrichment opportunities based on academic and career interests (page 26).

Weaknesses:

The applicant mentions the use of blended learning (page 29) to help remediate at-risk students. There is a growing body research that suggests blended learning can also be a powerful tool in accelerating students already performing on or above grade level. Perhaps the focus on remediation alone misses an opportunity to accelerate other students.

Reader's Score: 13

2. The extent to which the proposed project will assist educationally disadvantaged students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.

Strengths:

The overall strategy suggests that educationally disadvantaged students may be well served by DE Met.

Weaknesses:

The applicant references their strategy for serving ELL's and students with disabilities, under competitive preference priority number 1; however, they fail to elaborate as to how their strategy (page 30) will serve a broader cross section of educationally disadvantaged students.

The applicant fails to give baseline data for student achievement in the district nor does the applicant set achievement targets for its students.

The role of the Teacher adviser is unclear.

Reader's Score: 1

3. The quality of the strategy for assessing achievement of the charter school's objectives.

Strengths:

The goal areas outlined by the applicant address the full range of learning and development opportunities necessary to grow 21st century learners (pages 30-33).

The thoughtful focus on building reasoning & analytical skills, communication abilities, and personal qualities highlights a comprehensive approach to building thoughtful, engaged citizens.

Weaknesses:

While the applicant was very thoughtful in identifying the goal areas and identifying assessment tools (DCAS, EOC assessments, hours of community service, etc.), the applicant fails to set draft performance targets for student achievement on these exams.

For example, the applicant states that DE Met students will have dropout rates lower than the state average (page 33) and that students will earn competitive scores on college entrance exams (page 33). The measures are identified by the goal is broad and not specifically measured with performance targets, e.g., SMART goals.

Reader's Score: 13

The extent of community support for the application.

The Secretary considers the extent of community support for and parental and community involvement in, the charter school. In determining the extent of community support for, and parental and community involvement in, the charter school, the Secretary considers--

- (i) The extent of community support for the application (up to 4 points); and**
- (ii) The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the planning, program design, and implementation of the charter school (up to 4 points).**

Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the charter school, the Secretary encourages the applicant to describe how parents and other members of the community will be informed about the charter school and how students will be given an equal opportunity to attend the charter school.

General:

The applicant built strong community and parent support for its work.

Reader's Score: 8

Sub Question

1. The extent of community support for the application.

The Secretary considers the extent of community support for and parental and community involvement in, the charter school. In determining the extent of community support for, and parental and community involvement in, the charter school, the Secretary considers--

(i) The extent of community support for the application (up to 4 points)

Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the charter school, the Secretary encourages the applicant to describe how parents and other members of the community will be informed about the charter school and how students will be given an equal opportunity to attend the charter school.

Strengths:

DE Met enjoys broad community support as evidenced by the letters submitted in the appendix and the Wilmington Mayor's press release. The support is cross-sector with letters from private, public, and non-profit leaders in the Wilmington community.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

2. The extent of community support for the application.

The Secretary considers the extent of community support for and parental and community involvement in, the charter school. In determining the extent of community support for, and parental and community involvement in, the charter school, the Secretary considers--

(ii) The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the planning, program design, and implementation of the charter school (up to 4 points).

Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the charter school, the Secretary encourages the applicant to describe how parents and other members of the community will be informed about the charter school and how students will be given an equal opportunity to attend the charter school.

Strengths:

Parent & community involvement is part of the applicant's core strategy to accelerate student learning and as evidenced by the parental involvement in the PLP development (page 34) in addition to their on-going strategy to check-in with parents on student achievement.

Past outreach activities such as meeting with faith based leaders and civic associations (page 35) show a meaningful desire to engage community stakeholders.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. Quality of project personnel.

The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers--

- (i) The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability (up to 2 points); and
- (ii) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (up to 20 points).

Note: The applicant is encouraged to provide evidence of the key project personnel s skills and experience in the following areas: successfully launching a high-quality charter school; developing an innovative school design; relevant non-profit organization management and leadership; sound board governance; effective curriculum development and implementation; and strong fiscal management.

General:

The applicant has a very strong team in place.

Reader's Score: 20

Sub Question

1. Quality of project personnel.

The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers--

- (i) The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability (up to 2 points); and

Strengths:

The applicant's mission statement, values and staff diversity suggests a commitment to the employment of traditionally underrepresented groups (page 36).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

2. Quality of project personnel.

The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers--

Sub Question

(ii) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (up to 20 points).

Note: The applicant is encouraged to provide evidence of the key project personnel s skills and experience in the following areas: successfully launching a high-quality charter school; developing an innovative school design; relevant non-profit organization management and leadership; sound board governance; effective curriculum development and implementation; and strong fiscal management.

Strengths:

The project staff, CMO staff, and supporting team from BPL have extensive experience in public education, experience in the charter sector, and deep expertise at seemingly high performing organizations.

Education credentials of the lead team and supporting organizations are impressive.

Weaknesses:

Candidate resumes and biographies give very little information as to their achievement in previous positions and are heavily focused on inputs instead of outcomes. As such, it is difficult to evaluate the success of these teachers/leaders in the classroom and school setting.

Reader's Score: 18

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. Quality of the management plan.

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

Strengths:

The applicant lays out a thoughtful management plan that outlines the key responsibilities of the board, the CMO and leadership team, and the supporting organization.

The flow chart (page 46) outlining the management of the project plan is a good high level summary of key players (board, staff, parents, partner organization), activities, and associated outcomes.

Weaknesses:

While the flow chart is a helpful planning tool, it lacks specific measurables, dates/timelines, and milestones.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. Existence and quality of a charter or performance contract between the charter schools and its uauthorized public chartering agency. The existence of a written charter or performance contract between the charter school and its authorized public chartering agency and the extent to which the charter or performance contract describes how student performance will be measured in the charter

school pursuant to State assessments that are required of other schools and pursuant to any other assessments mutually agreeable to the authorized public chartering agency and the charter school. Note: The applicant is encouraged to submit a copy of its approved charter or performance contract. If the applicant has had an application for a charter denied, the applicant should describe the circumstances surrounding such denial and how it plans to revise the charter application before resubmitting it to the authorized public chartering agency.

Strengths:

The applicant has an approved five-year charter through the Delaware Department of Education.

While the applicant does not currently have a fully fleshed out performance agreement with the DDOE, the performance agreement in process (attachment T) outlines the broad criteria by which DE Met will be measured.

Weaknesses:

Specific performance measures are not yet identified between the application and the authorizer.

Reader's Score: 15

2. The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA and, if applicable, the LEA to the charter school.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the flexibility afforded under its State's charter school law in terms of establishing an administrative relationship between the charter school and the authorized public chartering agency, and whether charter schools are exempt from significant State or local rules that inhibit the flexible operation and management of public schools.

The Secretary also encourages the applicant to include a description of the degree of autonomy the charter school will have over such matters as the charter school's budget, expenditures, daily operations, and personnel in accordance with its State's charter school law.

Strengths:

The DDOE grants significant flexibility for the applicant to successfully execute its plan (pages 49-50), in addition to providing equitable formula funding and supplemental funding opportunities.

Additionally, the authorizer empowers the school to use a unique curriculum to serve its students.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Questions

Competitive Priority - Competitive Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1--Improving Achievement and High School Graduation Rates [Rural Students, Students with Disabilities, and English Learners]

This priority is for projects that are designed to address one or more of the following priority areas:

(a) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in this notice)

and college enrollment rates for students in rural local educational agencies (as defined in the notice).

(b) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the notice) and college enrollment rates for students with disabilities.

(c) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the notice) and college enrollment rates for English Learners.

Note: This competitive preference priority encourages the applicant to provide a thoughtful, in-depth response to the priority area(s) to which it is well-suited to respond. Applicants will receive up to four points for how well they address priority areas (a) through (c). Applicants may choose to respond to one, two, or three of the priority areas but, in order to receive the maximum available points, it is not necessary for applicants to respond to more than one priority area.

Strengths:

The candidate references the success of the BPL model (page 7-8) in serving subpopulations, including those listed under the competitive preference priority. Moreover, the data collected from other BPL schools plus local demographics of the students in Wilmington would suggest that DE Met will, in fact, serve a relatively high percentage of ELL students and students with disabilities.

The use of personalized learning plans (PLP) for all students (Page 9) is a powerful tool to ensure a more personalized learning strategy that will benefit all students, especially ELL's and students with disabilities.

Home language surveys plus on-going support, testing, and intense interventions with ELL students is a promising strategy for better serving the needs of these students. Moreover, the strategy to continue to monitor students for grade level mastery once they become fluent-English proficient (Page 12) ensures that students will not backslide.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

Competitive Priority - Competitive Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2--Promoting Diversity.

Projects that are designed to promote student diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, or avoid racial isolation.

Note: An applicant addressing Competitive Preference Priority 2--Promoting Diversity is invited to discuss how the proposed design of its project would help bring together students from different backgrounds, including students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, to attain the benefits that flow from a diverse student body, or to avoid racial isolation.

Note: For information on permissible ways to address this priority, please refer to the joint guidance issued by the Department of Education and the Department of Justice entitled, **Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity and Avoid Racial Isolation in Elementary and Secondary Schools** at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/guidance-ese-201111.pdf>.

Strengths:

The board adopted diversity statement (page 12) speaks to the organization's commitment to diversity.

The applicant's recruitment targets (page 13) for a truly diverse student body suggests that the DE Met has truly

prioritized the promotion of a diverse learning environment.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Priority - Competitive Priority 3

1. Competitive Preference Priority 3--Support for Military Families.

This priority is for projects that are designed to address the needs of military-connected students (as defined in this notice).

Note: For purposes of this program, projects meeting this priority must target military-connected students who are current or prospective public charter school students. The applicant's recruitment and admissions policy must comply with its State charter school law and CSP program requirements (for information on admissions and the lottery under the CSP, see Charter Schools Program Nonregulatory Guidance at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/charter/nonregulatory-guidance.html>).

Strengths:

The applicant did not address this competitive preference priority.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address this competitive preference priority.

Reader's Score: 0

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Innovative Schools Development Corporation (U282B130030)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Curriculum	15	13
2. Disadvantaged Students	3	1
3. Strategy for Achievement	15	13
4. Community Support	8	8
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Quality of Personnel	22	22
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	18	14
Quality of Project Design		
1. Performance Contract	16	14
2. Flexibility	3	3
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Competitive Priority 1		
1. Rural/SPED/ELL	4	4
Competitive Priority		
Competitive Priority 2		
1. Promoting Diversity	2	1
Competitive Priority 3		
1. Military Families	3	0
Total	109	93

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - Panel - 6: 84.282B

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Innovative Schools Development Corporation (U282B130030)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. I. Quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the quality of the educational program to be implemented by the proposed charter school, including how the program will enable all students to meet challenging State student academic achievement standards, the grade levels or ages of students to be served, and the curriculum and instructional practices to be used. If the curriculum and instructional practices have been successfully used in other schools operated or managed by the applicant, the Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the implementation of such practices and the academic results achieved.

Strengths:

The school will open in Delaware in the 2014-15 school year as the first full replication of the Big Picture Learning (BPL) school design for grades 9 – 12. (Page 3) It has three basic principles: 1) Learning must be based on each student's interests and needs; 2) Curriculum must be relevant to the student and allow them to do real work in the real world; and 3) Students' growth and abilities must be measured by the quality of their work and how it changes them. (Page 5)

Data and instructional strategies are presented in the proposal that support the increased academic learning of high-poverty students to improve high school graduation rates. The data indicates that the program will increase college enrollment and persistence rates for students in college. (Page 6-7)

All Delaware Met students will complete interest-based Learning Through Interests (LTI) experiences (LTIs) and community service projects outside of school. Students will explore their interests through internships and the advisors and content-area specialists will then tie these interests into the academic content through projects. (Page 19) At the internship site, student will complete an authentic project that is developed in cooperation with the mentor. Project-based learning (PBL) will be the delivery method that will focus on student's interests and provide a context and structure for integrating academic, technical, and career skills into a holistic learning opportunity. A summary of the research is provided on PBL and results have been positive when using this approach in the classroom. (e260-e262) The proposal included comments on building a school culture that promotes a respectful, diverse, creative, and exciting environment. (Page 21) Students, who struggle in the regular classroom, will be provided with a blended learning opportunity that coordinates the use of online and computer-based learning to supplement classroom instruction. This strategy will also meet the needs of a diverse student population at the DE Met. (Page 29)

Weaknesses:

The proposal provides very little information and structure of the curriculum program. There is no explanation on how the curriculum will be implemented and aligned with the standards for the state. The proposal did not include any selection criteria for the various high school curriculum programs and textbooks.

Reader's Score: 13

2. The extent to which the proposed project will assist educationally disadvantaged students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.

Strengths:

Wilmington's children are 68% Black (Non-Hispanic), 16% Hispanic, 14% White (Non-Hispanic), and 4% other. With a total population of just over 70,000, children ages 0-19 represent more than 27% of Wilmington's residents. The trends continue to show more children living in poverty and living in single-parent, and under-employed families, with 56% of these children residing in female-headed households. (Page 18) The DE Met will provide students with an innovative and academic program that challenges them through non-traditional, project-based teaching and learning methods. This school design has demonstrated effectiveness in other urban areas for high-need subgroups, specifically students with disabilities, low-income students, and African-American, Latino and ELL students. The different content areas did indicate that they will be correlated to the state standards and common core

Weaknesses:

The proposal did not include specific steps for implementing the program and did not describe how this would work with various student groups. There was no indication on the selection criteria for different programs and textbooks that would be used in the classroom. The different content areas did indicate that they will be correlated to the state standards and common core. No comments were included about using baseline student to determine academic growth.

Reader's Score: 1

3. The quality of the strategy for assessing achievement of the charter school's objectives.

Strengths:

The DE Met identified and address 6 goals for assessing achievement. Each goal was described and the data that will be collected to determine whether each one has been accomplished. These goals were explained in a clear manner and identified the expectations of the students who are enrolled in the school. The emphasis is on academic growth for the students in reading, math, science, and social studies as measured by the DCAS and the yearly attainment of the annual AYP goals. (Page 31-32) Additionally, the DE Met will reduce dropout rates and all students will apply to college and over 90% will be accepted. (Page 33)

The DE Met will publicize and hold a public lottery, applying preferences as stated in school's charter and in accordance with state law. The charter school has developed admissions preferences for available seats if there are more children than available seats. The DE Met will employ comprehensive, performance-based assessments in addition to traditional assessments. Each quarter, students will explain and defend their skills and learning through exhibitions of their work to advisors, parents, and community leaders. (Page 20) The team structure will ensure that students are well known in the school, as each core of four advisors will be responsible for 22 students each for a total of 88 students per team. (Page 22) Additional evaluation of success will include graduation rates, college enrollment and college persistence.

Weaknesses:

The proposal was unclear about what happens to a student who did not complete the project or had excessive absences in the program. No details were provided about students who do not want to participate in the internship and prefer on-line learning.

Reader's Score: 13

4. The extent of community support for the application.

The Secretary considers the extent of community support for and parental and community involvement in, the charter school. In determining the extent of community support for, and parental and community involvement in, the charter school, the Secretary considers--

- (i) The extent of community support for the application (up to 4 points); and
- (ii) The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the planning, program design, and implementation of the charter school (up to 4 points).

Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the charter school, the Secretary encourages the applicant to describe how parents and other members of the community will be informed about the charter school and how students will be given an equal opportunity to attend the charter school.

General:

See below

Reader's Score: 8

Sub Question

1. The extent of community support for the application.

The Secretary considers the extent of community support for and parental and community involvement in, the charter school. In determining the extent of community support for, and parental and community involvement in, the charter school, the Secretary considers--

- (i) The extent of community support for the application (up to 4 points)

Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the charter school, the Secretary encourages the applicant to describe how parents and other members of the community will be informed about the charter school and how students will be given an equal opportunity to attend the charter school.

Strengths:

The Delaware Met enjoys broad support from parents, local businesses, and the surrounding community, as evidenced by the letters of support that may be found in proposal. An extensive outreach plan has incorporated multiple opportunities and venues to ensure that all families, including families in poverty, academically low-achieving students, students with disabilities, and other youth at risk of academic failure are reached. (Page 33) The marketing plan will include the following: School Logo, Website, Recruitment brochure, Constant Contact software to distribute an electronic newsletter and email blasts, Flyers, Facebook and Twitter Accounts, E-Newsletter and Newspaper advertisement.

Weaknesses:

None noted

Reader's Score: 4

2. The extent of community support for the application.

The Secretary considers the extent of community support for and parental and community involvement in, the charter school. In determining the extent of community support for, and parental and community involvement in, the charter school, the Secretary considers--

Sub Question

(ii) The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the planning, program design, and implementation of the charter school (up to 4 points).

Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the charter school, the Secretary encourages the applicant to describe how parents and other members of the community will be informed about the charter school and how students will be given an equal opportunity to attend the charter school.

Strengths:

The DE Met Board has already begun the process of engaging and informing the Wilmington community about the development of the proposed school. To support this work, the Board has formed three outreach committees to focus specifically on the school's three key audiences – parents, students, and businesses. Advisors and parents will be involved in the leadership and decision-making within the school. A minimum of one Delaware certified advisor employed by the school and one parent of a student enrolled in the school will hold positions on the Board. Parents and advisors will also be represented on the schools' Citizens Budget Oversight Committee (CBOC) and Advisory Board. (Page 34) A variety of outreach activities has been used over the past two years to inform the community about the proposed school including: 1) meetings with civic, community and faith- based leaders to provide information about the Delaware Met proposal, answer questions, and gather their feedback for possible modifications; 2) meetings with civic associations from low- income neighborhoods to inform, collect feedback, and develop support; and 3) outreach to various charter schools in Wilmington that serve students in grades K-8. (Page 35)

Weaknesses:

None noted

Reader's Score: 4

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

Quality of project personnel.

The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers--

- (i) The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability (up to 2 points); and**
- (ii) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (up to 20 points).**

Note: The applicant is encouraged to provide evidence of the key project personnel s skills and experience in the following areas: successfully launching a high-quality charter school; developing an innovative school design; relevant non-profit organization management and leadership; sound board governance; effective curriculum development and implementation; and strong fiscal management.

General:

See below

Reader's Score: 22

Sub Question

1. Quality of project personnel.

Sub Question

The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers--

(i) The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability (up to 2 points); and

Strengths:

The Innovative Schools values diversity with the staff, school, and professional who participate in the staffing initiatives. This is based on the Mission Statement and Values included in the proposal.

Weaknesses:

None noted

Reader's Score: 2

2. Quality of project personnel.

The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers--

(ii) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (up to 20 points).

Note: The applicant is encouraged to provide evidence of the key project personnel s skills and experience in the following areas: successfully launching a high-quality charter school; developing an innovative school design; relevant non-profit organization management and leadership; sound board governance; effective curriculum development and implementation; and strong fiscal management.

Strengths:

The Project Director supervises professional development and curriculum development; provides professional development to local charter schools; researches successful models of comprehensive school design to replicate in Delaware schools; works with district and school leaders in Delaware around planning and is involved in many facets on the impact of instructional practices in schools The Project Director holds an Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instructional Literacy from the University of Delaware, an M.Ed. in School Leadership from Wilmington College, and a B.A. in English Education from the University of Delaware.

The principal of the Delaware Met will serve as the on-site Project Manager for the planning, program design and implementation of the school. Having recently completed the 'Principal in Residence' program, through the Delaware Leadership Project, she gained experience through an intensive leadership training program. Experiences included a daily focus on classroom walk-throughs and feedback, positive school culture, discipline, managerial duties, parent contact, and data-driven decision-making. The tasks included implementation of school-wide, professional learning communities, faculty meeting presentations, and a number of additional administrative functions. (Page 37)

As CMO for the Delaware Met, the Innovative Schools' (IS) Leadership Team will serve in key roles for the planning, program design and initial implementation activities of the school. In this capacity, team members will serve to ensure the successful launch of the Delaware Met, assist with the development of BPL's innovative school design elements, provide leadership and organizational management to executing all project tasks, build the Board's capacity for effective school governance and management through the IS Board Development Program, support effective curriculum development and implementation, and ensure strong fiscal management. The leadership team will ensure stable and effective governance and leadership, and superior student performance and school

Sub Question

operations in order to achieve the school's mission and vision.

The Executive Director of Innovative Schools (IS) has provided direction through major restructuring, transforming and reframing the organization as the Center for School Innovation, and has impacted public education in Delaware. She has a commitment to innovative school reform, dedication to cultivating effective partnerships, and capacity to foster collaborative teamwork. She has more than 20 years serving public education in Delaware. As an urban school principal in Wilmington, the team significantly raised the academic performance of students at-risk for failure and narrowed the achievement gap.

The Director of Finance and Operations at Innovative Schools spent nearly 20 years in the private sector in various roles that focused on creating and executing plans to programs and manage the day- to-day operations related to Finance, Human Resources, and Talent Management.

The Director of Development at Innovative Schools oversees a number of projects designed to support members of the community with replicating new school models. Projects she oversee include The Innovative School Model Initiative, a competitive grant competition run through a partnership with the United Way of Delaware to replicate new school models. She will be responsible for overseeing and coordinating Innovative Schools' newest business strategy to serve as a Charter Management organization for start-up charter schools in Delaware.

The Program Director has over 17 years of experience in the education field. He was a principal at two different elementary schools within the Appoquinimink School District. Prior to that, he was an Assistant Principal in the Christina School District. A former Teacher of the Year, he taught 5th and 6th grade at Stubbs Elementary School. (Page 36-40)

Weaknesses:

None noted

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. Quality of the management plan.

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

Strengths:

The Board of the Delaware Met (DE Met) has contracted with Innovative Schools (IS) to serve as the Charter Management Organization (CMO) for the first five years of the school's existence. IS will work with the DE Met to develop a budget for the next fiscal year, provide initial training to the Operations Manager (OM) on financial management and assist in developing and implementing the tasks and specific deliverables which are described in detail in the CMO contract between the Delaware Met and Innovative Schools. IS will assist the DE Met in developing appropriate procedures and timelines to ensure the successful planning, program design, and initial implementation of the DE Met. The proposal includes a general plan for achieving the project objective on time and within budget. (Page 45-46) IS will also assist in the implementation of the Big Picture Learning academic program and will serve as the main partner while BPL will serve as its subcontractor. IS will build the capacity of the DE Met board and staff to be able to sustain the administrative and academic functions of their charter school independent of a CMO by the first charter renewal. The proposal also indicates that there will be a Citizens Budget Oversight Committee (CBOC) and Advisory Board that will include parents and advisors. (Page 34)

Weaknesses:

The proposal does not include specific timelines, outcomes and defined responsibilities for the implementation of this grant. The objectives related to the proposal are very broad and do not include any specific performance measurements.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

- 1. Existence and quality of a charter or performance contract between the charter schools and its authorized public chartering agency. The existence of a written charter or performance contract between the charter school and its authorized public chartering agency and the extent to which the charter or performance contract describes how student performance will be measured in the charter school pursuant to State assessments that are required of other schools and pursuant to any other assessments mutually agreeable to the authorized public chartering agency and the charter school. Note: The applicant is encouraged to submit a copy of its approved charter or performance contract. If the applicant has had an application for a charter denied, the applicant should describe the circumstances surrounding such denial and how it plans to revise the charter applicant before resubmitting it to the authorized public chartering agency.**

Strengths:

The Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) is the authorized chartering agency for the Delaware Met (DE Met). The State Board on Education on June 20, 2013 approved the school's charter. The DE Met's approved charter application serves as the basis for the Performance Agreement and will function as an enforceable contract between the school and DDOE. The Performance Agreement is currently in development and will fully describe how student and school performance will be measured relative to the academic, financial and organizational performance frameworks, as defined by the DDOE. The Performance Framework sets the academic, fiscal, and organizational standards by which Delaware's public charter schools will be evaluated, informing the authorizer and charter school about each school's performance and sustainability. (Page 47)

Weaknesses:

It is difficult to determine what the charter agreement will include and if it will take into account student outcomes and professional development for the staff.

Reader's Score: 14

- 2. The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA and, if applicable, the LEA to the charter school.**

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the flexibility afforded under its State's charter school law in terms of establishing an administrative relationship between the charter school and the authorized public chartering agency, and whether charter schools are exempt from significant State or local rules that inhibit the flexible operation and management of public schools.

The Secretary also encourages the applicant to include a description of the degree of autonomy the charter school will have over such matters as the charter school's budget, expenditures, daily operations, and personnel in accordance with its State's charter school law.

Strengths:

Delaware gives its charter schools a high degree of autonomy and operational flexibility in return for accountability for achieving high levels of student performance. Delaware charter schools are free of many State and district rules and regulations governing public education. Instead, charters are subject to regular review and held to high standards of measurable student performance to maintain their charter, leading some to significantly outperform other schools that

serve similar populations. (Page 48) Charter schools, are not covered by collective bargaining agreements and therefore have more flexibility to set their own salaries and staffing levels. Overall, traditional LEAs have restrictions on over 70 percent of the funds they receive from the State, while charter schools have restrictions on only 10 percent of their state funding. This flexibility allows charter schools to be innovative and adaptive in how they manage their schools and to maximize their resources to meet the needs of their students. (Page 49)

Weaknesses:

None noted

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Questions

Competitive Priority - Competitive Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1--Improving Achievement and High School Graduation Rates [Rural Students, Students with Disabilities, and English Learners]

This priority is for projects that are designed to address one or more of the following priority areas:

(a) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in this notice) and college enrollment rates for students in rural local educational agencies (as defined in the notice).

(b) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the notice) and college enrollment rates for students with disabilities.

(c) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the notice) and college enrollment rates for English Learners.

Note: This competitive preference priority encourages the applicant to provide a thoughtful, in-depth response to the priority area(s) to which it is well-suited to respond. Applicants will receive up to four points for how well they address priority areas (a) through (c). Applicants may choose to respond to one, two, or three of the priority areas but, in order to receive the maximum available points, it is not necessary for applicants to respond to more than one priority area.

Strengths:

The Delaware Met (DE Met) Charter School will be implementing the Big Picture Learning (BPL) charter high school that has demonstrated success with the graduation rates at for BPL schools at 90%, versus 69.5% nationally. (Page 5) In five BPL schools across the country, students significantly outperform local school district students. 95% of BPL graduates are accepted into college and persistence was high at all three campuses, ranging from an average of 83% for Met Sacramento to 88% for MetWest and 91% for San Diego Met. (Page 6) The indication is that the graduates from BPL schools are college and career ready and are on track for college graduation. The BPL program has been successful in high schools that adopted this model.

In the Delaware Met (DE Met) Charter School, students will be placed on an academic team of four advisors who will loop with him or her through four years of high school to ensure the success of the whole student. (Page 9) Students who are "at-risk" will receive a Personal Learning Plan (PLP) and all the necessary accommodations to assist students in achieving grade level or performance expectations. Surveys will be sent to parents to complete if a language other than English is marked on the application form. (Page 10) The student will be assessed to determine the need of language support. Students who need language support and special education services will receive support from special educators and regular educators who will be trained in effective lesson delivery for ELL students. Informal and performance-based assessments and portfolios will be used to assess the students to determine academic achievement. (Page 12) The Delaware Met (DE Met) Charter School will make accommodations for students in order to be successful and continue on to college.

Weaknesses:

None noted

Reader's Score: 4

Competitive Priority - Competitive Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2--Promoting Diversity.

Projects that are designed to promote student diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, or avoid racial isolation.

Note: An applicant addressing Competitive Preference Priority 2--Promoting Diversity is invited to discuss how the proposed design of its project would help bring together students from different backgrounds, including students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, to attain the benefits that flow from a diverse student body, or to avoid racial isolation.

Note: For information on permissible ways to address this priority, please refer to the joint guidance issued by the Department of Education and the Department of Justice entitled, **Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity and Avoid Racial Isolation in Elementary and Secondary Schools** at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/guidance-ese-201111.pdf>.

Strengths:

The proposal includes the 'Diversity Statement' that was developed and approved by the school's Board of Directors as part of its charter application. (Page 12) The Delaware Met will achieve diversity through strategic recruitment and student enrollment of 60% minority, 40% non-minority, and 35% non-low-income, and 65% low- income. (Page 13)

Weaknesses:

While diversity was established as a major priority of the Board, no specific steps were identified in the proposal on how this will be achieved. The diversity statement included the following comments: "Delaware Met will seek to achieve this diversity through strategic recruitment, and placement of the school," (Page 13) but did not explain or provide strategies for implementing this priority.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Priority - Competitive Priority 3

1. Competitive Preference Priority 3--Support for Military Families.

This priority is for projects that are designed to address the needs of military-connected students (as defined in this notice).

Note: For purposes of this program, projects meeting this priority must target military-connected students who are current or prospective public charter school students. The applicant's recruitment and admissions policy must comply with its State charter school law and CSP program requirements (for information on admissions and the lottery under the CSP, see **Charter Schools Program Nonregulatory Guidance** at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/charter/nonregulatory-guidance.html>).

Strengths:

Not addressed

Weaknesses:

Not addressed

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/21/2013 08:33 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/28/2013 04:44 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Innovative Schools Development Corporation (U282B130030)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Curriculum	15	13
2. Disadvantaged Students	3	2
3. Strategy for Achievement	15	13
4. Community Support	8	8
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Quality of Personnel	22	18
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	18	15
Quality of Project Design		
1. Performance Contract	16	16
2. Flexibility	3	3
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Competitive Priority 1		
1. Rural/SPED/ELL	4	4
Competitive Priority		
Competitive Priority 2		
1. Promoting Diversity	2	2
Competitive Priority 3		
1. Military Families	3	0
Total	109	94

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - Panel - 6: 84.282B

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Innovative Schools Development Corporation (U282B130030)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. I. Quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the quality of the educational program to be implemented by the proposed charter school, including how the program will enable all students to meet challenging State student academic achievement standards, the grade levels or ages of students to be served, and the curriculum and instructional practices to be used. If the curriculum and instructional practices have been successfully used in other schools operated or managed by the applicant, the Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the implementation of such practices and the academic results achieved.

Strengths:

The applicant provided a detailed overview of the BPL school design's student-centered philosophy, components, strategies and overall quality as evidenced by a comparative track record of success in other cities with similar student demographics. Collectively, BPL's comprehensive model addresses gauging and exploiting students' interests, PLPs, authentic and traditional assessment, standards-based traditional and blended instruction, project-based learning, differentiation, small teams/advisory groups, student connectivity and ownership, family engagement, partnerships and on-going professional development aligned to the BPL Model. Solid descriptions of the applicant's planned curricular and instructional approaches to integrated Humanities (ELA and Social Studies), Math and Science (via the Integrated Mathematics Program/IMP), Spanish, Health, Visual and Performing Arts and structured internships (via Career Pathways/Learning Through Interests (LTI) were provided as well. There was also a clear presentation of the school's plans to incrementally increase in grade levels, which should allow for data-driven reflection and related refinement of curricula and instructional practices over its first three years of operation. (pp. 9, 18-29).

Weaknesses:

The success of the applicant's ambitious curricular and instructional plans will be highly dependent upon initial and on-going high-quality professional development. The various specific areas of professional development necessary for the teacher-advisors are noted throughout. However the feasibility of the majority the essential training taking place prior to the school opening is somewhat questionable. (pp. 19-29).

Reader's Score: 13

2. The extent to which the proposed project will assist educationally disadvantaged students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.

Strengths:

As mentioned earlier, the applicant provided a very detailed overview of the quality of the school's chosen student-centered curricular and instructional philosophy, plan, components, strategies and resources inclusive of the potential merits there of. The proposal also evidenced the founding group's plans to establish and maintain small student advisory groups, as well as efforts to attract and retain highly qualified teachers. Particular related programmatic strengths that seek to support educationally disadvantaged students include interest-driven planning, student-led PLPs/conferences,

periodic progress monitoring, project-based learning, RTI, data-driven flexible small group learning, structured Learning Through Interests (LTI) experiences and remediation through data-informed blended learning activities. (pp. 18-30).

Weaknesses:

Although the expanded support roles of the teacher-advisors were clear, there was no specific evidence of plans for guidance and counseling or social work services provision by certified professionals.

Reader's Score: 2

3. The quality of the strategy for assessing achievement of the charter school's objectives.

Strengths:

The proposal provided detailed descriptions of the school's five (5) standards-aligned goals, the respective assessment measures and the related general structures for data-driven decision-making around curricula and instruction. Specifically, the proposal outlines plans for the administration, collection, tracking, analysis and utilization of data from the DCAS (ELA, Math and Science), NWEA MAP, interim and end-of-course classroom assessments, quarterly exhibitions and school climate reports. The charter agreement requires the school to develop goals and performance outcomes in the areas of academic performance, financial performance and organizational performance as well. (pp. 30-33, Appendices T and U).

Weaknesses:

No specific draft performance targets were set and/or provided for the school's five goals. (pp. 30-33, Appendices T and U).

Reader's Score: 13

The extent of community support for the application.

The Secretary considers the extent of community support for and parental and community involvement in, the charter school. In determining the extent of community support for, and parental and community involvement in, the charter school, the Secretary considers--

- (i) The extent of community support for the application (up to 4 points); and**
- (ii) The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the planning, program design, and implementation of the charter school (up to 4 points).**

Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the charter school, the Secretary encourages the applicant to describe how parents and other members of the community will be informed about the charter school and how students will be given an equal opportunity to attend the charter school.

General:

i) The proposal provided strong evidence of community support for the proposed school and its mission, vision and plans as outlined. Letters of support for this application from individuals representing a cross section of various important stakeholder groups were provided (e.g. parents and local businesses). A supportive press release from the Mayor was also provided. The school has reportedly formed three outreach committees focused on parents, student and businesses, respectively. The proposal also provides a marketing plan and evidence of other outreach activities inclusive of meetings with community-based organizations, civic associations and faith-based leaders to inform them of the proposed school, solicit feedback and garner support. There are also plans to continue these outreach efforts and initiate others throughout the planning year. (pp. 33-34, Appendices M and N).

(ii) There was likewise solid evidence provided around the school's detailed plans to encourage parental and community involvement. This evidence included a marketing plan aimed at establishing partnerships with community businesses focused on the LTI initiative. Plans for parent involvement include participation in PLP meetings, representation on the school advisory board, the establishment of one seat on the board for a parent representative, and the establishment of family engagement committees on both boards. (pp. 34-36, Appendix N).

Reader's Score: 8

Sub Question

1. The extent of community support for the application.

The Secretary considers the extent of community support for and parental and community involvement in, the charter school. In determining the extent of community support for, and parental and community involvement in, the charter school, the Secretary considers--

(i) The extent of community support for the application (up to 4 points)

Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the charter school, the Secretary encourages the applicant to describe how parents and other members of the community will be informed about the charter school and how students will be given an equal opportunity to attend the charter school.

Strengths:

(i) The proposal provided strong evidence of community support for the proposed school and its mission, vision and plans as outlined. Letters of support for this application from individuals representing a cross section of various important stakeholder groups were provided (e.g. parents and local businesses). A supportive press release from the Mayor was also provided. The school has reportedly formed three outreach committees focused on parents, student and businesses, respectively. The proposal also provides a marketing plan and evidence of other outreach activities inclusive of meetings with community-based organizations, civic associations and faith-based leaders to inform them of the proposed school, solicit feedback and garner support. There are also plans to continue these outreach efforts and initiate others throughout the planning year. (pp. 33-34, Appendices M and N).

Weaknesses:

(i) No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 4

2. The extent of community support for the application.

The Secretary considers the extent of community support for and parental and community involvement in, the charter school. In determining the extent of community support for, and parental and community involvement in, the charter school, the Secretary considers--

(ii) The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the planning, program design, and implementation of the charter school (up to 4 points).

Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the charter school, the Secretary encourages the applicant to describe how parents and other members of the community will be informed about the charter school and how students will be given an equal opportunity to attend the charter school.

Sub Question

Strengths:

(ii) There was likewise solid evidence provided around the school's detailed plans to encourage parental and community involvement. This evidence included a marketing plan aimed at establishing partnerships with community businesses focused on the LTI initiative. Plans for parent involvement include participation in PLP meetings, representation on the school advisory board, the establishment of one seat on the board for a parent representative, and the establishment of family engagement committees on both boards. (pp. 34-36, Appendix N).

Weaknesses:

(ii) No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 4

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. Quality of project personnel.

The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers--

- (i) **The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability (up to 2 points); and**
- (ii) **The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (up to 20 points).**

Note: The applicant is encouraged to provide evidence of the key project personnel s skills and experience in the following areas: successfully launching a high-quality charter school; developing an innovative school design; relevant non-profit organization management and leadership; sound board governance; effective curriculum development and implementation; and strong fiscal management.

General:

- (i) The proposal provides adequate evidence of the applicant's beliefs around the importance and potential collective benefits of a diverse faculty, staff, student body and collaborative partners. (pp. 36, Appendix D).
- (ii) Collectively, the qualifications, skills and experience of the founding group and key personnel were relatively strong. Specifically, the Project Director and other key CMO personnel seem to have relevant training in and experience with pedagogy and school operations. The chosen principal recently completed the Delaware Leadership Project's (DLP) Principal in Residence program inclusive of a wide array of leadership activities and is in the process of attaining her doctorate for Administrator Leadership for Teaching and Learning. According to the proposal she will receive 60 hours of coaching per year from the DLP as well as support from Innovative Schools and Big Picture Learning. (pp. 36-41).

Weaknesses:

- (i) The proposal lacked articulation of specific steps the founding group would take to recruit, retain and support a diverse faculty and staff (i.e. recruitment and marketing strategies, job fairs, outreach via multiple mediums, etc.). (pp. 36, Appendix D).
- (ii) While the chosen principal has recently completed the aforementioned residence program, she has had very limited experience in school administration. It is also unclear if and when she plans to become certified. (pp. 37).

Reader's Score: 18

Sub Question

1. Quality of project personnel.

The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers--

(i) The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability (up to 2 points); and

Strengths:

(i) The proposal provides adequate evidence of the applicant's beliefs around the importance and potential collective benefits of a diverse faculty, staff, student body and collaborative partners. (pp. 36, Appendix D).

Weaknesses:

(i) The proposal lacked articulation of specific steps the founding group would take to recruit, retain and support a diverse faculty and staff (i.e. recruitment and marketing strategies, job fairs, outreach via multiple mediums, etc.). (pp. 36, Appendix D).

Reader's Score: 1

2. Quality of project personnel.

The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers--

(ii) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (up to 20 points).

Note: The applicant is encouraged to provide evidence of the key project personnel s skills and experience in the following areas: successfully launching a high-quality charter school; developing an innovative school design; relevant non-profit organization management and leadership; sound board governance; effective curriculum development and implementation; and strong fiscal management.

Strengths:

(ii) Collectively, the qualifications, skills and experience of the founding group and key personnel were relatively strong. Specifically, the Project Director and other key CMO personnel seem to have relevant training in and experience with pedagogy and school operations. The chosen principal recently completed the Delaware Leadership Project's (DLP) Principal in Residence program inclusive of a wide array of leadership activities and is in the process of attaining her doctorate for Administrator Leadership for Teaching and Learning. According to the proposal she will receive 60 hours of coaching per year from the DLP as well as support from Innovative Schools and Big Picture Learning. (pp. 36-41).

Weaknesses:

(ii) While the chosen principal has recently completed the aforementioned residence program, she has had very limited experience in school administration. It is also unclear if and when she plans to become certified. (pp. 37).

Reader's Score: 17

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. Quality of the management plan.

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

Strengths:

The applicant provided a detailed overview of the charter organization's proposed project management and fiscal oversight approach, clearly articulating the roles and responsibilities of the governing board, CMO, BPL, project director, operating manager (yet to be hired) and principal/project manager. These plans included steps for establishing, monitoring and modifying the management plan and internal controls processes. Accounting standards and related tools were identified, as well as plans for the provision of direct support around fiscal management to be provided by the CMO. The plans for the establishment and implementation of the Citizens Budget Oversight Committee were also articulated with an acknowledgement of the need for its members to be training and supported in the early years of school operation. The ideals of transparency, sustainability and viability were clear throughout these plan descriptions. (pp. 41-46).

Weaknesses:

The application lacked specific management timelines, milestones, project tasks, responsible parties, etc. This makes the quality and feasibility of the overall plan difficult to evaluate. (pp. 41-46).

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

- 1. Existence and quality of a charter or performance contract between the charter schools and its authorized public chartering agency. The existence of a written charter or performance contract between the charter school and its authorized public chartering agency and the extent to which the charter or performance contract describes how student performance will be measured in the charter school pursuant to State assessments that are required of other schools and pursuant to any other assessments mutually agreeable to the authorized public chartering agency and the charter school. Note: The applicant is encouraged to submit a copy of its approved charter or performance contract. If the applicant has had an application for a charter denied, the applicant should describe the circumstances surrounding such denial and how it plans to revise the charter applicant before resubmitting it to the authorized public chartering agency.**

Strengths:

The proposal included a copy of the school's charter performance agreement with its authorizer the Delaware Department of Education as approved by the Delaware State Board of Education. The charter performance agreement includes frameworks for external and internal annual evaluations of the school's academic, financial and organizational performance. The Delaware accountability system also requires public charter schools to submit annual reports documenting progress towards its annual goals in these areas. Evidence was also provided indicating that renewal/revocation decisions for new public charter schools in Delaware take place in the fifth year of operation. Specific targets are in the process of being developed, which is not unusual for start-ups. (pp. 47, Appendices S, T and U).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 16

2. The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA and, if applicable, the LEA to the charter school.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the flexibility afforded under its State's charter school law in terms of establishing an administrative relationship between the charter school and the authorized public chartering agency, and whether charter schools are exempt from significant State or local rules that inhibit the flexible operation and management of public schools.

The Secretary also encourages the applicant to include a description of the degree of autonomy the charter school will have over such matters as the charter school's budget, expenditures, daily operations, and personnel in accordance with its State's charter school law.

Strengths:

The proposal provides solid evidence of Delaware public charter schools being afforded flexibility and accountability around school governance, fiscal decision-making, operations, curricula and instruction, and personnel decisions. Specific areas of autonomy set forth in state law include status as an independent LEA, programmatic management, budgets and operations, real estate ownership, hiring/firing decision-making, establishment of academic and social standards, and admissions processes, among others. There appeared to be strong congruence between the authorizing environment described and the qualities encouraged by the Secretary. (pp. 48-50).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Questions

Competitive Priority - Competitive Priority 1

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 1--Improving Achievement and High School Graduation Rates [Rural Students, Students with Disabilities, and English Learners]**

This priority is for projects that are designed to address one or more of the following priority areas:

(a) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in this notice) and college enrollment rates for students in rural local educational agencies (as defined in the notice).

(b) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the notice) and college enrollment rates for students with disabilities.

(c) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the notice) and college enrollment rates for English Learners.

Note: This competitive preference priority encourages the applicant to provide a thoughtful, in-depth response to the priority area(s) to which it is well-suited to respond. Applicants will receive up to four points for how well they address priority areas (a) through (c). Applicants may choose to respond to one, two, or three of the priority areas but, in order to receive the maximum available points, it is not necessary for applicants to respond to more than one priority area.

Strengths:

(b) The proposal provided strong evidence of plans to execute sound research and best practice-based programming aimed at accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates and college enrollment rates for students with disabilities. Specifically, the Big Picture Learning (BPL) model's tenants of child-centered instruction, rigorous and relevant curricula and instruction inclusive of project-based learning, and measureable academic and personal growth were evidenced to produce measureable results across student sub-groups, including students with disabilities in high-poverty schools. These results include comparatively high graduation rates as well as higher college acceptance and persistence rates. The proposal also provides evidence of thoughtful planning and human resource allocations focused on high quality instruction for students with disabilities via a community-based approach that seemingly goes far beyond mere compliance. These plans include hiring dual-certified special education instructors, a special education coordinator, Individual Education Program (IEP) teams, integration of Individualized Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) and IEP goals, parental involvement, targeted push-in/pull-out instruction, implementation of the three-tiered Response to Intervention (RTI) process, looped instruction and teachers serving as advisors. (pp. 7-10).

(c) The proposal provided strong evidence of plans to execute sound research and best practice-based programming aimed at accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates and college enrollment rates for English Learners. Specifically, the aforementioned BPL model's principles and components which have been evidenced as successful, coupled with a sound ELL plan for screening, initial diagnostic assessment, goals-setting, and progress monitoring via student-led PLP conferences utilizing portfolios. Plans around parent involvement, annual assessment and exiting and transition planning were also provided. Moreover, the proposal included plans to employ the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) to plan and implement ELL and content-based instruction. There was also an acknowledgement of the need for students' advisors to be trained in this approach to better support student learning through this scaffold approach. (pp. 10-12).

Weaknesses:

(b) No weaknesses were noted.

(c) No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 4

Competitive Priority - Competitive Priority 2**1. Competitive Preference Priority 2--Promoting Diversity.**

Projects that are designed to promote student diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, or avoid racial isolation.

Note: An applicant addressing Competitive Preference Priority 2--Promoting Diversity is invited to discuss how the proposed design of its project would help bring together students from different backgrounds, including students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, to attain the benefits that flow from a diverse student body, or to avoid racial isolation.

Note: For information on permissible ways to address this priority, please refer to the joint guidance issued by the Department of Education and the Department of Justice entitled, *Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity and Avoid Racial Isolation in Elementary and Secondary Schools* at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/guidance-ese-201111.pdf>.

Strengths:

The proposal evidences that the applicant has established diversity as a major priority as evidenced by the drafting of a diversity statement inclusive of the need for and potential benefits of establishing and maintaining a diverse school community. Evidence is also presented speaking to the applicant's plans to create a diverse learning community through strategic recruitment and school location. Furthermore, the applicant goes as far as providing specific demographic goals, while recognizing the need to be compliant with applicable state and local enrollment laws. Lastly, the BPL model has student-school-community connectivity at its core, which if implemented with fidelity, should minimize if not eliminate the potential for racial isolation. (pp. 12-13).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Priority - Competitive Priority 3**1. Competitive Preference Priority 3--Support for Military Families.**

This priority is for projects that are designed to address the needs of military-connected students (as defined in this notice).

Note: For purposes of this program, projects meeting this priority must target military-connected students who are current or prospective public charter school students. The applicant's recruitment and admissions policy must comply with its State charter school law and CSP program requirements (for information on admissions and the lottery under the CSP, see Charter Schools Program Nonregulatory Guidance at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/charter/nonregulatory-guidance.html>).

Strengths:

No strengths were noted.

Weaknesses:

There was no mention of specific components or practices focused on addressing the needs of military-connected students.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/28/2013 04:44 PM