

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/28/2014 04:32 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: SOAR Academies (U282B140042)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Curriculum	15	13
Significance		
1. Achievement Standards	5	5
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Assessing Achievement	15	14
Quality of Project Design		
1. Community Support	10	10
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	22	21
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	15	5
Quality of Project Design		
1. Existence of charter	15	15
Adequacy of Resources		
1. Degree of Flexibility	3	3
Priority Questions		
Improving Achievement and High School Graduation		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. CPP 1	4	2
Support for Military Families		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. CPP 2	3	3
Total	107	91

Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - Non-SEA Charter Schools - 5: 84.282B

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: SOAR Academies (U282B140042)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. Quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices. (15 points)

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 and content 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 indicates that its instructional practice will follow the gradual release model (p. e21).

The applicant indicates that its curriculum and instructional practices will align with the Common Core State Standards, Next Generation Science Standards, Washington State Social Studies Learning Standards, and National Council for Social Studies' C3 Framework. The Habits of Mind standards will also be incorporated. The school will provide a personalized learning plan for each student that will be the result of collaboration between school staff, students, and families. The school is modeling its data driven assessment approach after high-performing charter management organizations that will inform the instruction and curriculum. Its instructional strategies will be a combination between teacher-centered and student-centered instruction. The curriculum will also feature a flipped classroom structure and extended learning opportunities. (p. e21-30)

Weaknesses:

The applicant expresses its reliance on small class sizes but lists class sizes as at 25 students per class (p. e?).

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The extent to which the proposed project will assist educationally disadvantaged students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards. (5 points)

Strengths:

The applicant notes its intentional design to support the learning of all students including those with disabilities, English Language Learners and those with other risk-factors. For students with disabilities the school will use an RtI framework to identify those students, teachers will be trained by special education staff to monitor student performance, and the school will create a Student Intervention Team of parents, administrators, teachers, the school counselor, the Special Education teacher, a psychologist and any wraparound service providers assigned to the student. This team will analyze data and create a student Intervention Plan to address the needs of those students. (p. e30-33)

The applicant details its approach for English Language Learners through a home language survey and a sheltered English immersion program (p. e38-39).

The applicant details its approach to at-risk students that includes a multi-tiered approach to identify challenges early on and address them through positive behavioral supports and social/emotional programs. (p. e39-41).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The quality of the strategy for assessing achievement of the charter school s objectives. (15 points)

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to propose a comprehensive plan for assessing the achievement of the charter school 's objectives, including developing of 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 Performance Measures section of the 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 Performance Measures requirements when addressing this criterion.

Strengths:

The applicant provides a detailed list of objectives and performance targets that are measurable and increasingly rigorous over years of the school's existence. The objectives cover student performance, attendance, and retention (p. e66-68).

The school will use a variety of national and internal assessments to measure their students' progress and inform instructional and curricular strategies (p. e 42-4)

The applicant includes financial performance targets (p. e157)

Weaknesses:

The objectives do not include performance measures for human capital and operational goals or objectives.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. 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:

(Please provide your responses in sub-questions 1 and 2.)

Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the planning, program design, and implementation of 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.

(10 points total)

General:

The applicant has a comprehensive and intentional plan to involve community and parents in every part of the project. The school has also provided evidence of significant community support on both the national and local level.

Reader's Score: 10

Sub Question

1. (i) The extent of community support for the application (up to 5 points).

Strengths:

The applicant has provided an extensive amount of letters of support and a petition detailing state and local support for the school (p. e74-92). Support was significant from the Washington Charter Schools Association and from parents and community leaders for the school leaders.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 5

2. (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 5 points).

Strengths:

The applicant describes how the school and the school leader has involved community and parental input in the planning and program design of the school including community forums, parent meetings, and meetings with city officials and community-based organizations. The applicant also describes its plan for family home visits, a family document called the "Commitment to Excellence," and multi-language marketing materials. The school has planned a number of community and school events and forums after the school is open. The school has also established a community/parent engagement goal to measure the school's progress, including parent and community surveys issues twice annually (p. e46-50, 74-82).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

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

(Please provide your responses in sub-questions 1 and 2.)

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to provide evidence of the key project personnel' s skills, experience, and success in the following areas: launching a high-quality charter school; developing an innovative school design; managing or leading a non-profit organization; establishing or maintaining school governance by board of trustees; developing and implementing an effective curriculum; recruiting and evaluating effective educators; and strengthening fiscal management.

(22 points total)

General:

Overall, the leadership and founding of the school appears to be on strong footing through the support of Washington State and a number of partners. It is difficult to understand which of the personnel with resumes included in the application will serve in which roles within the school.

Reader's Score: 21

Sub Question

1. (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).**

Strengths:

The applicant indicates that it is working with community partners to ensure that it is attracting minority applicants for the school (p. e51).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not address how it is attracting other traditionally underrepresented groups.

Reader's Score: 1

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

Strengths:

The applicant provides an extensive description of the principal's qualifications including serving as a principal in Seattle Public Schools as a "transformation" principal appointed by the Superintendent, and participant in the Senior Fellow Program for aspiring charter leaders in Washington, a state where charter schools were just recently allowed by law (p. e50-53).

The applicant also includes resumes for the SOAR board of directors that details their qualifications. The applicant also includes job descriptions for the leadership team members that will be hired as well (p. e93-127).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. **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. (15 points)**

Strengths:

The applicant has a provider for financial and operational services that is experienced and well esteemed that also enables the school board to retain all of its decision-making authority and its fiduciary responsibilities (p. e54).

The board, from its resumes, demonstrates experience with charter startup, nonprofit management and performance management.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide a timeline with clearly defined responsibilities or milestones for accomplishing project tasks. This is critical to be able to evaluate if the current staff is qualified to undertake this project and complete the tasks assigned to them. The milestones are necessary to include to properly evaluate how the school defines success and if that definition is adequate.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

- 1. Existence and quality of a charter or performance contract between the charter school 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. (15 points)

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 charter contract with the Washington State Charter School Commission. The contract references the measures and targets the school has provided which are aligned to state standards and state assessments (p. e137). The performance framework the contract will use to indicate specific measures, metrics, and targets are still in development. This is the result of charter schools and charter school regulations being so relatively new in Washington state, but the school will abide by all recommendations until the framework is finalized.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

- 1. The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA and, if applicable, the LEA to the charter school. (3 points)**

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, curriculum, and personnel in accordance with its State s charter school law.

Strengths:

The applicant indicates that Washington State charter law is ranked 6th out of 43 by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools and provides flexibility for charters to innovate when it comes to scheduling, personnel, funding and educational programs (p. e57).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Questions**Improving Achievement and High School Graduation - Competitive Preference 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 the 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: The Department encourages the applicant to provide a thoughtful, in-depth response to the priority area(s) to which it is well-suited to respond. Applicants may choose to respond to one or more of the priority areas and are not required to respond to each priority area in order to receive the maximum available points under this Competitive Preference Priority.

Strengths:

The applicant indicates it will use a Response to Intervention approach with special populations that structure interventions in a progressive, tiered framework (p. e61).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not connect its strategies to how that will improve high school graduation rates or college enrollment rates for the populations mentioned here. Given that this is a K-8 school, that link is particularly important. To this end, the school did not provide enough information to evaluate how the school will be tracking students through high school and connecting with local community groups to aid in high school graduation and college enrollment.

Reader's Score: 2

Support for Military Families - Competitive Preference Priority 2**1. Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Support for Military Families.**

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

Note: To receive points under this priority, an applicant' s project must target military-connected students who are current or prospective public charter school students. The applicant' s recruitment and admissions policies and practices must comply with the State s 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 indicated its proximity to the Joint Base Lewis-McChord, the personal connection the CEO of the school has to the base, and its intent to make about 30% of the student population comprised of students from military families (p. e62).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/28/2014 04:32 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/02/2014 10:22 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: SOAR Academies (U282B140042)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Curriculum	15	12
Significance		
1. Achievement Standards	5	5
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Assessing Achievement	15	13
Quality of Project Design		
1. Community Support	10	10
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	22	21
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	15	6
Quality of Project Design		
1. Existence of charter	15	15
Adequacy of Resources		
1. Degree of Flexibility	3	3
Priority Questions		
Improving Achievement and High School Graduation		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. CPP 1	4	1
Support for Military Families		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. CPP 2	3	3
Total	107	89

Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - Non-SEA Charter Schools - 5: 84.282B

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: SOAR Academies (U282B140042)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. Quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices. (15 points)

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 and content 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 serves K-1 in 2015 and will add one grade level each year until K-8 (Abstract, e15).

The applicant provided a good description of gradual release of responsibility model, which will prepare students to own individual projects/group work. This will prepare students for college, where class work and time is more self-directed.

The school will incorporate Habits of Mind, which was used in a successful school in New Orleans (e72), to help students inquire, think flexibly, and learn from other perspectives when they don't immediately know the answers.

Weaknesses:

Applicant's case for gradual release model would be stronger if they had provided an example of a school in which the model has been used and then discussed how they would use learnings from that school to plan and execute this model at Soar Academies. Applicant did not mention which materials were selected for science and other content areas.

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The extent to which the proposed project will assist educationally disadvantaged students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards. (5 points)

Strengths:

The school is located in the Hilltop community, where 63% of students are eligible for FRL (e15) against a state average of 46% FRL. IEPs will be created for all students to ensure growth. They have an RTI framework and a Student Intervention Team (e30, e41).

Weaknesses:

none

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The quality of the strategy for assessing achievement of the charter school s objectives. (15 points)

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to propose a comprehensive plan for assessing the achievement of the charter school 's objectives, including developing of 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 Performance Measures section of the 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 Performance Measures requirements when addressing this criterion.

Strengths:

The school used Common Core Standards for English and Math in setting academic measures and targets (e42) and a varied set of assessments, including diagnostics for new students, state-mandated assessments as well as benchmark and interim math and literacy assessments. The school will also administer the NWEA MAP, which adjusts to fit each student's level. The school will also use adaptive learning programs, which also collect data on students' progress. Teachers will be expected to analyze the data weekly to identify and address gaps in students learning through differentiated instruction and small group interventions, etc.(e43). The applicant also provided specific measures on e66 and an assessment calendar on e73. The student achievement goals for English, math, and science are structured such that the expectations are higher each year the student is at Soar, which is good because students will be held to progressively higher expectations the more years they are at the school.

Weaknesses:

The Applicant did not address the goals for students in their first year at Soar and also didn't include any operations goal. This would be good to include to ensure model overall is sustainable.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. 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:

(Please provide your responses in sub-questions 1 and 2.)

Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the planning, program design, and implementation of 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.

(10 points total)

General:

Reader's Score: 10

Sub Question

1. (i) The extent of community support for the application (up to 5 points).

Strengths:

The applicant has extensive support from WA Charter School Association and numerous letters from organization leaders in the community in support of the founder & CEO. There was also a letter from the PTA Leader/Parent Advocate (e85) as well as lots of signatures from community members.

It seems like the applicant solicited feedback at community meetings during the design phase.

Weaknesses:

none

Reader's Score: 5

2. (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 5 points).

Strengths:

The applicant engaged with community members at community fairs, churches, and other community orgs. They also conducted canvassing and door-to-door outreach during student recruitment. The applicant describes how parents will be involved in the ongoing implementation of the school beyond the involvement of the PTA group on e46-50. Before the school opening, Soar will hold a series of parent meetings to set academic and behavioral expectations, enrolled students will receive a home visit from a teacher, and the students, families, and the school sign a Commitment to Excellence agreement to outline how each party will help the student reach his/her academic goals (e47). After the school's opening, the school has a robust outline of events through which to engage families; some events include student led family conferences; community conversations/monthly coffee talks with school director, student Rite of Passage presentations, etc.

Weaknesses:

none

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

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

(Please provide your responses in sub-questions 1 and 2.)

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to provide evidence of the key project personnel' s skills, experience, and success in the following areas: launching a high-quality charter school; developing an innovative school design; managing or leading a non-profit organization; establishing or maintaining school governance by board of trustees; developing and implementing an effective curriculum; recruiting and evaluating effective educators; and strengthening fiscal management.

(22 points total)

General:

Reader's Score: 21

Sub Question

1. (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).**

Strengths:

Applicant mentioned plan to partner with The Black Collective, United Way, etc. to recruit diverse teachers and staff (e51).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not attach any letters of support from The Black Collective/United Way (mentioned above) and no details about what the partnership would entail. The applicant should state whether or not open staff positions will be publicized in a United Way newsletter/website, or if they are seeking a more robust teacher recruitment partnership.

The founder also has strong ties to Teach For America (TFA) and could have mentioned recruitment of TFA alumni (teachers with two or more of experience). 50% of TFA's teaching corps consisted of people of color this year.

Reader's Score: 1

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

Strengths:

The Founder & CEO was a Leadership Fellow at Washington Charter Association this past year, through which she visited many high-performing charter schools across the country and received extensive training through the WA Charter Association (e52). She also has a great track record of teaching and leading schools with a high population of students from under-served populations as described in the app and via many of the letters of support starting on e75.

Weaknesses:

It was not immediately clear if the resumes starting on e93 (with [REDACTED]) were resumes of board members or potential staff.

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. **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. (15 points)**

Strengths:

The Washington State Charter Schools Commission will provide some strategic support and ongoing feedback and evaluation.

EdTec, which has worked with many charter schools across multiple states, will contract with Soar Academies on back end financial services.

Weaknesses:

No responsibilities, milestones, breakdown of responsibilities were provided, so its hard to see if the management plan will achieve the objectives of the school on time and within budget.

Reader's Score: 6

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design**1. Existence and quality of a charter or performance contract between the charter school 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. (15 points)

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 charter. The school will use a variety of performance measures to asses the students' progress in reading, math, science, Habits of Mind, enrollment, attendance, and student retention (e66-68). The goal around developing a positive school culture that is culturally responsive through Habits of Mind was particularly great through the Rites of Passage portfolio. The portfolio exercise and the broader Habits of Mind curriculum will give students ongoing opportunities to reflect on key habits such as persistence, clear communication, teamwork, responsible risk-taking, etc.

Weaknesses:

none

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources**1. The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA and, if applicable, the LEA to the charter school. (3 points)**

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, curriculum, and personnel in accordance with its State's charter school law.

Strengths:

Applicant listed that charters in WA are allowed flexibility in personnel hiring and firing, scheduling, funding, and program.

It acts as its own LEA governed by the board of directors.

Weaknesses:

none

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Questions

Improving Achievement and High School Graduation - Competitive Preference 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 the 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: The Department encourages the applicant to provide a thoughtful, in-depth response to the priority area(s) to which it is well-suited to respond. Applicants may choose to respond to one or more of the priority areas and are not required to respond to each priority area in order to receive the maximum available points under this Competitive Preference Priority.

Strengths:

The three-tiered RTI framework going from school-wide systems to support all students to progressively more individualized interventions seems comprehensive and meets the school's philosophy of serving special education students in the least restrictive environment (e61). The school also has a solid plan to form a Student Intervention Team, which will work to address the needs of students.

Weaknesses:

Applicant didn't connect the dots to demonstrate how these activities would specifically improve high school graduation rates, except trying to get students into college prep high schools after 8th grade.

Reader's Score: 1

Support for Military Families - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Support for Military Families.

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

Note: To receive points under this priority, an applicant's project must target military-connected students who are current or prospective public charter school students. The applicant's recruitment and admissions policies and practices must comply with the State's 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:

Applicant states that there is an army/air force base 17 miles from the school site and the Founder has personal ties to the military community. The school estimates that 30% of the student population will be from the military base in Tacoma (e62). The school will address the social and emotional needs of these students, who face frequent moves and loss.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: **3**

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/02/2014 10:22 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/29/2014 08:55 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: SOAR Academies (U282B140042)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Curriculum	15	11
Significance		
1. Achievement Standards	5	5
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Assessing Achievement	15	13
Quality of Project Design		
1. Community Support	10	9
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	22	20
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	15	5
Quality of Project Design		
1. Existence of charter	15	15
Adequacy of Resources		
1. Degree of Flexibility	3	3
Priority Questions		
Improving Achievement and High School Graduation		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. CPP 1	4	2
Support for Military Families		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. CPP 2	3	3
Total	107	86

Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - Non-SEA Charter Schools - 5: 84.282B

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: SOAR Academies (U282B140042)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. Quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices. (15 points)

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 and content 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 proposed curriculum and instructional practices described in the application provides a thorough description of how the program will allow student to meet State student academic achievement and content standards starting with the mission and vision (e18) and recognition that the students have been low performing for several generations (e19). The program described includes gradual release (going from teacher-centered to student-centered; direction instruction to group work, and station rotation to flipped classroom) to prepare the students for the rigors of college-prep high school programs (e21) through standards based curriculum, personalized learning plans, data driven instruction and planning, technology, arts exploration, and a multi-tiered system of support. The framework is discussed on pages e18-e30 and summarized on e65.

Weaknesses:

It is interesting to note that personalized learning via small class sizes is the strategy for the school and yet the application states that class sizes will be limited to no more than 25. The applications uses the evidence for the advantages for small class size in the Finn, Gerber, Achilles, and Bod-Zaharis 2001 study. This brings up the question on what is a small class size. The discrepancy between what this reviewer had previously learned about class size caused an in-depth review of this study. The study defines a small class size as between 13-17 students and a normal class size as 22-26 students. Therefore, the review of the study revealed a discrepancy between the application and the quoted research and brings up a significant concern about how the teachers will have the capacity to accomplish the lofty goals in grades K-3. Also, while the theory of curriculum seems to be strong, it does not seem like actual materials have been selected for reading, writing, math, and science nor a timeline on when these will be available.

Reader's Score: 11

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The extent to which the proposed project will assist educationally disadvantaged students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards. (5 points)

Strengths:

The section on assisting educationally disadvantaged students was thorough and well-thought out. This included details on how special education (e31-e34), 504 (e34-e37), ELL (e38-39), at-risk (e39-e41) services would be provided through a three-tier system and measured.

Weaknesses:

There are no perceived weaknesses in this item.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation**1. The quality of the strategy for assessing achievement of the charter school s objectives. (15 points)**

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to propose a comprehensive plan for assessing the achievement of the charter school 's objectives, including developing of 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 Performance Measures section of the 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 Performance Measures requirements when addressing this criterion.

Strengths:

There are a significant number of performance targets in the appendices for reading/language arts, math, science (e66-e67), behavioral (ee67-68), and financial targets (e157-e170). The document talked about summative assessments like Smarter Balance and NWEA-MAP (e42), and interim assessments OSPI (e42), and internal assessments (e42), adaptive online learning programs (e43), and weekly performance updates.

Weaknesses:

The major weakness was the lack of operational objectives aside from financial ones (safety, building, and professional development). This may have been clearer if there was a detailed timeline mentioned in the management plan. While multi-year goals are mentioned in the strengths above, there is no mention of first year goals.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design**1. 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:**

(Please provide your responses in sub-questions 1 and 2.)

Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the planning, program design, and implementation of 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.

(10 points total)

General:

There is a lot of support from the community. It would have been nicer to see more actual parent numbers.

Reader's Score: 9

Sub Question

1. (i) The extent of community support for the application (up to 5 points).

Strengths:

There seems to be broad community support for the school based on the letters in the application:

1. A facility has been secured (e45).
2. Two letters were from people in the Washington State Charter School Commission stating impact on emerging charter school sector (e74), and the director's participation in the year-long fellowship (e75).
3. A letter of support from the Seneca Family of Agencies mentioning the partnership to work together to develop a comprehensive approach to education and mental health needs of the students (e76).
4. Teach for America says that they are pleased to be working together with SOAR and look forward to the long-term relationship to support SOAR's talent needs (e78).
5. University of Washington commits to placing teacher candidates in high needs and high achieving schools (e80-82).
6. A Washington state legislator (e79), CEO of League of Education Voters (e83), parent and PTA Leader (e85) all support the application.
7. There are also signatures of members who support the school (e86-e88) as well as those who have attended meetings (e89-e92).

Weaknesses:

It would have been nice to see the number of parental commitments to enrolling their student in the school.

Reader's Score: 4

2. (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 5 points).

Strengths:

The document states that engagement of the community began in 2013 with community meetings (e45) and the letters of support in items 2-5 in the question above indicates not only the amount of support but the involvement in planning the school and commitment to continue the partnerships (e74-82). The statement that "SOAR Academy aims to be a community partner" is echoed throughout the application and the letters (e45). The application states what the intent is for parent involvement, how the school worked with families prior to opening, what the plan is after opening, and what the plan is to track family and community engagement after opening (e50).

Weaknesses:

There are no perceived weaknesses in this item.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

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

(Please provide your responses in sub-questions 1 and 2.)

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to provide evidence of the key project personnel's skills, experience, and success in the following areas: launching a high-quality charter school; developing an innovative school design; managing or leading a non-profit organization; establishing or maintaining

school governance by board of trustees; developing and implementing an effective curriculum; recruiting and evaluating effective educators; and strengthening fiscal management.

(22 points total)

General:

With the school opening in the Fall of 2015, at this stage of development, the CEO on staff and board seem very strong.

Reader's Score: 20

Sub Question

- 1. (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).**

Strengths:

Not only is there a commitment to being an equal opportunity employer, there are statements on how diversity will be attained through relationships with the United Way, Black Collective, Tacoma-Pierce Chamber of Commerce (e51).

Weaknesses:

While African Americans were mentioned, there seemed to be no mention of attracting other underrepresented groups.

Reader's Score: 1

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

Strengths:

Since the school is not slated to open until the Fall of 2015 and the CEO has been hired with a strong board, the board and proposed job descriptions are what were evaluated for this item. The CEO, board, job descriptions and recruiting effort indicated that this is a strong application. The CEO has been a public school educator and principal for 14 years including being appointed as a transformational principal and a teacher for underserved students (e51, e113-e117). The principal has been part of the state's year-long fellowship program and is willing to develop partnerships with many organizations (e52). The assumed board includes the following individuals:

- [REDACTED] – business development, fundraising, politics (e93)
- [REDACTED] – legal, previous boards, student mentor (e94-e96)
- [REDACTED] – Fundraising, philanthropy, arts, social services, higher education (e97-e98)
- [REDACTED] – Ed.D, Educational services and leadership, higher education, health, multi-cultural, boards and publications including addressing the achievement gap (e99-e105)
- [REDACTED] – Ed.D, Multicultural Education, program development, fiscal management, higher education (e106-e111)
- [REDACTED] – IT (e112)

Also included are job descriptions for the leadership that indicates a division of responsibility that each individual will have a capacity to accomplish the tasks mentioned in the job duties:

- Leadership team (e119)
- CEO (e120)
- School Director (e121-e122)
- 2 Deans of Academics (e123-e124)
- Dean of Culture and Engagement (e125)
- Chief Operations Manager (e126-e127)

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

There is some concern whether enrollment will be able to support 6 administrators.

Reader's Score: 19

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

- 1. 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. (15 points)**

Strengths:

There were some key strengths of the management plan including the following:

- Washington State Charter Schools Commission letters of support and Performance Framework (including the commission's commitment to help the school).
- The document mentions EdTec for financial and back office services and that EdTec has provided operations services for 325 charter schools which has not provided services in and is devoted two staff members to Washington State since 2013 (e54).
- There were measures for
 - o Reading/Language Arts (e66)
 - o Math (e66-e67)
 - o Sciences (e67)
 - o Habits of Mind (non-academic, behavioral e67-e68)
 - o Enrollment, retention, attendance (e68)
 - o Financial accountability (in the draft Financial Performance Framework e157-e170)
- There was a timeline for assessments (e73)

Weaknesses:

The management plan could be improved in a number of ways:

- There are no timelines (aside for assessments) and key milestones aside from what is mentioned above.
- A detailed budget could allay concerns about whether the promises for the number of administrators, cost of EdTec, and other costs could be funded.
- The math measures seemed to be an exact copy of the wording for reading/language arts so they were difficult to verify.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

- 1. Existence and quality of a charter or performance contract between the charter school 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. (15 points)

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:

There is a charter school contract on pages e129-e156. Also included are the Financial Performance Framework draft on e157-e170.

Weaknesses:

There are no perceived weaknesses in this item.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

1. The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA and, if applicable, the LEA to the charter school. (3 points)

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, curriculum, and personnel in accordance with its State s charter school law.

Strengths:

It appears that Washington's charter law is very new (2012) and the application states what the flexibilities in the law are for scheduling, personnel, funding, and educational programs. The application in this section indicates that the applicant will leverage the flexibility of the law to hire and fire employees, receive funds, and enter into contracts.

Weaknesses:

There are no perceived weaknesses in this item.

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Questions

Improving Achievement and High School Graduation - Competitive Preference 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 the 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: The Department encourages the applicant to provide a thoughtful, in-depth response to the priority area(s) to which it is well-suited to respond. Applicants may choose to respond to one or more of the priority areas and are not required to respond to each priority area in order to receive the maximum available points under this Competitive Preference Priority.

Strengths:

While this is a K-8 school (e15), there still were significant attempts to link this school to high school graduation and college enrollment rates for students with disabilities and English Learners. Every student will be provided with a personalized education and special populations will receive the least restrictive environment, identification, Response to Intervention in a tiered framework with Grade Level Team Meetings and Student Intervention Meetings (e61-e62). The link to high school and college is through the mission: the personalized education experience is intended to prepare students for high school, college, and beyond (e63).

Weaknesses:

There are no statistics showing how the K-8 program will improve high school graduation rates and college enrollment rates – either proposed in the measurements or for similar schools. There could have been more attempts to measure how K-8 students are progressing toward high school graduation and college enrollment rates such as tracking or tying specific tests to high school and college success.

Reader's Score: 2

Support for Military Families - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Support for Military Families.

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

Note: To receive points under this priority, an applicant's project must target military-connected students who are current or prospective public charter school students. The applicant's recruitment and admissions policies and practices must comply with the State's 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:

There is a strong commitment to military families starting with the discussion that the Lewis-McChord Army/Air Force base is close by and gives statistics of the base and one of the reasons for the school's location was due to the proximity to the base. The founder and CEO is an active-duty military spouse and has volunteered with the military base for 4 years and intends to leverage the connections for the school and the estimate is that 30% of the students will represent military families (e62).

Weaknesses:

There are no perceived weaknesses in this item.

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted

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