

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

Status: Submitted

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## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: California School Finance Authority (U282D140004)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Need for Project</b>		
1. Need for Facility Funding	30	26
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Quality of Plan	30	23
<b>Quality of Project Personnel</b>		
1. Grant Project Team	10	7
<b>Adequacy of Resources</b>		
1. Budget	10	8
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Project Evaluation	10	4
<b>Adequacy of Resources</b>		
1. State Experience	10	10
<b>Sub Total</b>	100	78
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priorities</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
1. CPP 1	10	7
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
1. CPP 2	10	6
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 3</b>		
1. CPP 3	20	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	40	13
<b>Total</b>	140	91

# Technical Review Form

## Panel #1 - Charter School Programs - Facilities - 1: 84.282D

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

Applicant: California School Finance Authority (U282D140004)

### Questions

#### Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. The need for per-pupil charter school facility funding in the State.
2. The extent to which the proposal meets the need to fund charter school facilities on a per-pupil basis.

#### Strengths:

The applicant presents a very thorough picture of the state funding available to both charter schools and district schools. Additionally, the financial landscape of the state is described and the negative impact this landscape will have on charter schools in the next several years, not being fully funded until 2021. Pgs. 14 – 18 (1)

The State Facilities program is funded by voter initiative and has been successful in gaining three bond issuances from 2002 – 2006. Of the \$28.7 billion approved in these three ballot measures \$900 million was secured for charter schools. However, since there has not been a bond issuance since 2006 charter schools are struggling to find facility funding. School districts have been able to gain additional capital through local bond issues, State Facilities Program funds and developer fees. Pgs. 18 – 21 (2)

A table is provided demonstrating the continued growth of charter school population and the necessary costs to have facilities available for those students. This information demonstrates the substantial need that is and will continue to be unmet even with the federal monies. Pg. 22 (1)

#### Weaknesses:

The application indicates that the proposed number of students that will be enrolled in a charter school will increase dramatically over the next 5 years. There is not evidence presented that demonstrates how the requested grant amount will meet the facility needs of these students.

Reader's Score: 26

#### Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The likelihood that the proposed grant project will result in the State either retaining a new per-pupil facilities aid program or continuing to enhance such a program without the total amount of assistance (State and Federal) declining over a five-year period.
2. The flexibility charter schools have in their use of facility funds for the various authorized purposes.
3. The quality of the plan for identifying charter schools and determining their eligibility to receive funds.
4. The per-pupil facilities aid formula s ability to target resources to charter schools with the greatest need and the highest proportions of students in poverty.

**5. For projects that plan to reserve funds for evaluation, the quality of the applicant s plan to use grant funds for this purpose.**

**6. For projects that plan to reserve funds for technical assistance, dissemination, or personnel, the quality of the applicant s plan to use grant funds for these purposes.**

**7. The extent to which the proposed project is supported by strong theory (as defined in this notice).**

**Note: The applicant should review the Performance Measures section of this notice for information on the requirements for developing project-specific performance measures and targets consistent with the objectives of the program.**

**Strengths:**

Information provided on Table I demonstrates that available funds will be stable throughout the grant period. The amount of state matching will actually increase slightly over the 5 years of the program. Pg. 22

Charter schools receiving facility funds through this program will have a large amount of flexibility as to how the funds can be utilized. The narrative indicates these funds may be used for rent, lease, mortgage and debt service payments as well as for the acquisition of new or renovated facilities. Pg. 24

The applicant indicates a broad set of eligibility requirements for all charter schools wishing to apply for funding through this program. Through collaboration with charter authorizers and the California Department of Education, the applicant will determine if a charter school applying for assistance is in good terms with their authorizer and are meeting the terms of their charter agreement. Once this determination is made, individual charter schools are critiqued against a set of specific criteria that will determine which charter schools have the greatest need. Pgs. 26- 27

State laws have helped define the process of identifying and selecting the charter schools with the greatest needs. Through a priority driven application, charter schools located in areas where a large percentage of students qualify for free or reduced lunch will receive priority points in the process. Pg. 27

Goals and objectives are stated along with metrics used to judge progress towards the goals. A general timeline is included for the grant program indicating when the grant funds will be available to charter schools for application and final award. Pg. e30 – e31 and pg. e75

The applicant provides a detailed discussion of the data collection process that supports the theory behind this model. Information is gathered from reliable sources regarding participating charter schools relative to accounting, governance and operational status. This information is given to the CSFA to determine if the law supporting this program that defines the strong theory, is being upheld by program participants. Pg. 31 and e76 – e77

**Weaknesses:**

It is unclear whether or not the amount listed on Table I line 4 is actually a per-pupil allotment for facilities that all charter schools currently receive or if this amount is related to only charter schools involved in one of the facilities grant programs administered by the CSFA. More clarity surrounding these programs and how they relate back to the state providing a per-pupil allotment outside of the operational money received from the state should have been provided.

While the priority application will assist the CSFA in determining which charter schools to provide assistance, the priority points awarded in the application for charter schools providing a choice in communities of “greatest need” should be further defined. Pgs. 27 – 28

The applicant plans to use grant funds for evaluation, but does not include a description of how these funds will be used to evaluate the goals and objectives of the project. The narrative discusses using evaluation funds to fund personnel costs

to evaluate program applications and travel costs associated with the program. There is also no discussion of how the applicant will document the project procedures and project results. Pgs. 28 – 29

There is no discussion of technical assistance that will be provided specifically to charter schools.

A narrative version of the Logic Model explains assumptions made from prior experiences utilizing program funds. The application should have included a discussion of how these funds will be utilized moving forward in the program. The application would have been stronger if the goals and objectives would have been presented, along with the information in the Logic Model, is a format that provided clear inputs, outputs and outcomes related to the program.

**Reader's Score: 23**

### **Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel**

- 1. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project manager and other members of the grant project team, including employees not paid with grant funds, consultants, and subcontractors.**
- 2. The adequacy and appropriateness of the applicant s staffing plan for the grant project.**

#### **Strengths:**

The executive director of this project has many years of experience in the municipal finance market, with 12 years spent with the CSFA. Additionally, the representative from the State Treasurer's Office has worked with CSFA for 12 years. Both individuals bring significant experience with similar grant programs to this new project. Pg. 32

#### **Weaknesses:**

The narrative indicates there are nine other individuals in the CSFA office that will provide assistance to the program. There is no information given about these individuals in the section narrative or Appendix E. Additionally, the applicant has not identified the skills and education necessary for the positions within the grant project team.

There is no staffing plan provided, except to say the program will continue to be administered the same as with previous grant programs. This information should have been included in the application. Pg. 33

**Reader's Score: 7**

### **Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources**

- 1. The extent to which the requested grant amount and the project costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed grant project.**
- 2. The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of students served and to the anticipated results and benefits.**
- 3. The extent to which the non-Federal share exceeds the minimum percentages (which are based on the percentages under section 5205(b)(2)(C) of the ESEA), particularly in the initial years of the program.**

**Strengths:**

The requested amount of grant funds is in line with the scope of the proposed project. Based on historical evidence of the previous two grants, the requested dollar amount will continue to address the facility needs of charter schools in the state of California. Pg. 34

According to information provided in Table I, the number of students enrolled in charter schools will top half a million during this grant cycle. The costs charged to the grant will not exceed 4%, well below the allowed 5%, securing as much funding as possible to assist charter schools with facility acquisition. Pg. e56

The non-Federal share of funding that will be provided by the applicant more than exceeds the requirement of the program. Pg. 35

**Weaknesses:**

The narrative does not discuss the number of charter school students that will be assisted through the 5 years of the grant program. There is also not a sense of what results will be anticipated from this project.

**Reader's Score: 8**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation**

1. 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project.
2. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which
  - i. The methods of evaluation are thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project.
  - ii. The methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.
  - iii. The methods of evaluation will provide valid and reliable performance data on relevant outcomes.

**Strengths:**

The evaluation component described in the law on page e64 of the Appendix lists specific criteria that will be used to evaluate charter schools to be included in this grant program. Pg. e64

**Weaknesses:**

The goals and objectives of the program include a description of the goals and metric to be measured. While these metrics are useful in the description of the goal they are not specific enough to be used in a program evaluation. There is no discussion of how the goals and the measurement of the goals will help improve the overall program implementation. Pg. 30 – 31 and 36

There is no discussion of periodic assessments that will take place during the proposed project making it difficult to secure valid and reliable performance data related to the proposed outcomes.

**Reader's Score: 4**

## Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

1. **The experience of the State in addressing the facility needs of charter schools through various means, including providing per-pupil aid, access to State loan or bonding pools, and the use of Qualified Zone Academy Bonds.**

### **Strengths:**

The CSFA has been primarily focused on assisting charter schools with facility funding since 2002. During this time they have developed six charter school programs ranging from tax-exempt bonds to grant programs that support charter schools with costs of rent, lease, acquisition and purchase of facilities. Pg. 37 – 38

The administration of the CSFA was recently transferred from the California Department of Education to the CSFA. This transfer was made during the 13-14 budget, proposed by the Governor and approved by the legislature. This vote of confidence demonstrates that the CSFA has done well with their endeavors to secure and monitor financing charter schools in their capital projects. Pg. 37

The applicant included the laws relating to the formation of the CSFA and regulations that govern the programs it administers. Appendix.

### **Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 10**

## Priority Questions

### **Competitive Preference Priorities - Competitive Preference Priority 1**

1. **The applicant must meet all of the requirements in (a) through (d) in order to receive the full 10 points. The requirements are:**

#### **(a) Periodic Review and Evaluation**

**The State provides for periodic review and evaluation by the authorized public chartering agency of each charter school at least once every five years, unless required more frequently by State law, to determine whether the charter school is meeting the terms of the school s charter and is meeting or exceeding the student academic performance requirements and goals for charter schools as set forth under State law or the school s charter.**

#### **(b) Number of High-Quality Charter Schools**

**The State has demonstrated progress in increasing the number of high-quality charter schools that are held accountable in the terms of the schools charters for meeting clear and measurable objectives for the educational progress of the students attending the schools, in the period prior to the period for which the State applies for a grant under this competition.**

**Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to include in its application an analysis of the number of charter schools meeting and exceeding State academic targets, as well as the number of charter schools that have been closed due to academic and operational performance.**

#### **(c) One Authorized Public Chartering Agency Other Than a Local Educational Agency (LEA), or an Appeals Process**

**The State -**

1. **Provides for one authorized public chartering agency that is not a LEA, such as a State chartering board, for each individual or entity seeking to operate a charter school pursuant to State law; or**
2. **In the case of a State in which LEAs are the only authorized public chartering agencies, allows for an appeals process for the denial of an application for a charter school.**

**(d) High Degree of Autonomy**

**The State ensures that each charter school has a high degree of autonomy over the charter school s budgets and expenditures.**

**Strengths:**

State law requires that charter schools are monitored yearly by their authorizing body and are held to the standards set in the original charter agreement. Additionally, state law requires charter schools to meet a specified threshold on the statewide standards. Once the original charter agreement is reviewed, subsequent charters will be granted for a period of five years. Pgs. 3 – 4

School districts are the authorizing agency within the state of California. However, an appeals process is in place that includes the State Board of Education and the county Board of Education in which the prospective charter school is located. Pg. 6

The narrative indicates that the state’s charter law includes a “mega waiver” exempting charter schools from many laws and regulations. Charter schools are given control over their own budgets and with the new state funding formula described, the charter school is able to use general purpose funds for any use. Additionally, most charter schools maintain their own governing body outside of the sponsoring district. Pg. 7-8

**Weaknesses:**

While the narrative indicates the number of charter schools has increased over the past year, there is not a comparison of the number of charter schools in prior years. Additionally, there is no specific information given relative to the quality of these charter schools. The applicant should have presented data comparing academic achievement of students in charter schools vs. district schools. It is not enough to state that a charter school is held to a higher standard because of the conditions written in the charter agreement. There is no data provided regarding the number of charter schools that were closed because of poor performance in the last school year. Pg. 5-6

**Reader's Score: 7**

**Competitive Preference Priorities - Competitive Preference Priority 2**

**1. The Secretary will award up to 10 points to an application under this competitive preference priority regarding the capacity of charter schools to offer public school choice in those communities with the greatest need for this choice based on:**

**1. The extent to which this applicant would target services to geographic areas in which a large proportion or number of public schools have been identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA).**

**Note: In order for a State with an approved request for ESEA flexibility to receive points under this competitive preference priority, the State should target geographic areas in which a large proportion or number of public schools have been identified as priority or focus schools or belong to a subset of other Title I schools specifically identified as low-achieving under the State s approved ESEA flexibility request (see the June 7, 2012, ESEA Flexibility document at [www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility](http://www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility)). The State should also describe how its proposed project is consistent with the efforts to serve students attending priority or focus schools described in its approved request for ESEA flexibility.**

**2. The extent to which the applicant would target services to geographic areas in which a large proportion of students perform poorly on State academic assessments; and**

**3. The extent to which the applicant would target services to communities with large proportions of low-income students.**

**Strengths:**

The application states priority points will be given in the application process to charter schools that will be located in geographic area where a large number of public schools do not meet state criteria per the NCLB Act of 2001. Pg. 9

Through preference points on the funding application for facilities grants, the applicant will identify charter schools that are located in areas of high poverty and low student academic performance. Pgs. 10 – 11

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not address the status of the state's ESEA waiver.

There is no specific information provided that would indicate the applicant will target charter schools within communities where a large percentage of students perform poorly on state assessments or communities with a large percentage of low-income students. Data should have been presented comparing areas of the state relative to these two criteria, providing an overview of possible geographic regions that should be targeted. Pgs. 11 – 12

**Reader's Score: 6**

**Competitive Preference Priorities - Competitive Preference Priority 3**

- 1. The Secretary will award an additional 20 points to an application under a competitive preference priority for applicants that have not previously received a grant under this program.**

**Strengths:**

None noted.

**Weaknesses:**

This applicant is a previous grantee under this program.

**Reader's Score: 0**

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**Last Updated:** 07/31/2014 11:38 AM

Status: Submitted

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## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: California School Finance Authority (U282D140004)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Need for Project</b>		
1. Need for Facility Funding	30	25
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Quality of Plan	30	25
<b>Quality of Project Personnel</b>		
1. Grant Project Team	10	7
<b>Adequacy of Resources</b>		
1. Budget	10	10
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Project Evaluation	10	5
<b>Adequacy of Resources</b>		
1. State Experience	10	10
<b>Sub Total</b>	100	82
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priorities</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
1. CPP 1	10	8
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
1. CPP 2	10	7
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 3</b>		
1. CPP 3	20	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	40	15
<b>Total</b>	140	97

# Technical Review Form

## Panel #1 - Charter School Programs - Facilities - 1: 84.282D

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

Applicant: California School Finance Authority (U282D140004)

### Questions

#### Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. The need for per-pupil charter school facility funding in the State.
2. The extent to which the proposal meets the need to fund charter school facilities on a per-pupil basis.

#### Strengths:

California public school enrollment overall has shown dramatic increase over time – charter school enrollment is also increasing steadily over years but charter schools cannot access same resources and financing options as public school districts. (e 27)

Charter schools in California cannot issue tax-supported debt as public districts can (e. 33) and therefore end up borrowing against per-pupil operational monies.

Charter schools face higher rates for borrowing since they are not typically investment grade credit ratings (e 34)

#### Weaknesses:

It is unclear if the passage of the new LCCF will change the way that charter schools are funded in a significant way – thereby creating less of a need for additional funding for charter school facilities from the federal level (p. e28, 29, 30)

California charter schools enjoy a number of grant and loan programs already – the chart in the section on State Experience spells out all of these sources which total hundreds of millions of dollars already invested in and available to charter schools in California.

Reader's Score: 25

#### Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The likelihood that the proposed grant project will result in the State either retaining a new per-pupil facilities aid program or continuing to enhance such a program without the total amount of assistance (State and Federal) declining over a five-year period.
2. The flexibility charter schools have in their use of facility funds for the various authorized purposes.
3. The quality of the plan for identifying charter schools and determining their eligibility to receive funds.
4. The per-pupil facilities aid formula s ability to target resources to charter schools with the greatest need and the highest proportions of students in poverty.
5. For projects that plan to reserve funds for evaluation, the quality of the applicant s plan to use grant

funds for this purpose.

6. For projects that plan to reserve funds for technical assistance, dissemination, or personnel, the quality of the applicant's plan to use grant funds for these purposes.

7. The extent to which the proposed project is supported by strong theory (as defined in this notice).

**Note: The applicant should review the Performance Measures section of this notice for information on the requirements for developing project-specific performance measures and targets consistent with the objectives of the program.**

**Strengths:**

On pages e36 – 39, the applicant provides specifics on Bills that have been passed in CA regarding how funding flows to charter schools.

This applicant has received this grant in the past and has a rigorous application process for charter schools to qualify for this grant program – evaluation including the success rates of each is noted.

Specifics from applicant for how grant funds may be used (purchase, design, construction, or renovation of facilities) for up to \$1,000 per student (\$500,000 cap per year for up to 3 years).

Ability to determine eligibility is specified.

Use the authorizer to verify status of each school prior to funding - also use reviews from the California Department of Education. (e40)

The applicant awards points to based on students with the greatest need. (e41)

Administrative costs are reasonable – less than 1% of previous award.

**Weaknesses:**

No information was provided to explain how the funding from a new grant will actually target the students with the greatest need. The information included in this section points to a possible new performance indicator that would give additional points to schools within a geographic area or school district with a high number for schools on "PI" Program Improvement status (e 42) but this is still under consideration and not guaranteed.

All eligibility appears to be determined by schools that exist and their current student populations, rather than by specific need (per grant guidelines) for children in targeted geographies.

The applicant did not provide information on how grant dollars will be used to provide Technical assistance to schools - the only technical assistance noted will be provided to the applicant (CFSA) p.e43

Goals and objectives in the logic model and in this section are very general – the applicant did not provide metrics to determine if and when goals are met (other than a timeline for the implementation. P e 44

**Reader's Score: 25**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel**

1. **The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project manager and other members of the grant project team, including employees not paid with grant funds, consultants, and**

**subcontractors.**

**2. The adequacy and appropriateness of the applicant s staffing plan for the grant project.**

**Strengths:**

The Executive Director has extensive experience in working with the legislature and in investment banking – she has led the office for 14 years. (p. e 45)

The General Counsel from the State Treasurer will participate in administering the program (p. e46)

**Weaknesses:**

The narrative (p e 47) points to additional staff members and detailed resumes for each to be included in Attachment E - but only the resumes are included.

Information on staff who will implement the program or evaluate the charter schools that will participate in the program is not included in the application.

Information about staff members who will evaluate the effectiveness of the program is not included in the application.

**Reader's Score: 7**

**Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources**

- 1. 1. The extent to which the requested grant amount and the project costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed grant project.**
- 2. The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of students served and to the anticipated results and benefits.**
- 3. The extent to which the non-Federal share exceeds the minimum percentages (which are based on the percentages under section 5205(b)(2)(C) of the ESEA), particularly in the initial years of the program.**

**Strengths:**

All costs related to grant administration appear to be reasonable. CFSA is able to leverage its relationships and partnerships with other state agencies to share administrative costs across several different departments.

The costs related to total number of students served and anticipated results appear to be reasonable.

The State of California will provide significant matching funds in relation to the federal grant request “The grant request is \$50 million over a five year period. In comparison State matching funds are projected to total \$1.5 billion (from 3 programs) during the same timeframe.” p. e 49

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 10

### Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project.
2. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which
  - i. The methods of evaluation are thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project.
  - ii. The methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.
  - iii. The methods of evaluation will provide valid and reliable performance data on relevant outcomes.

#### Strengths:

On page E44 – a chart of goals for evaluation is included.

The applicant has provided information related to the results of a similar grant program from 2004 and from 2009.

The California Code of Regulations document that is included (p e 60 – 63) includes a provision for evaluation of recipients of the grant program from the past two rounds in which California received grant awards.

#### Weaknesses:

The project goals are general and do not include specific metrics to be used to determine how and when goals will be met.

The applicant should provide more details regarding the types of evaluation it intends to employ to measure stated goals. (e44 and e 50)

While the applicant appears to understand a need to evaluate the charter schools that are recipients of the funding for facilities, it does not demonstrate an understanding that it also needs to evaluate its own effectiveness in administering the program overall. This information is missing from the application.

Reader's Score: 5

### Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

1. The experience of the State in addressing the facility needs of charter schools through various means, including providing per-pupil aid, access to State loan or bonding pools, and the use of Qualified Zone Academy Bonds.

#### Strengths:

The fact that this applicant has extensive experience administering a facility incentive grant program for the past several years (the result of two previous grant awards from the DOE) leads to great confidence in the California group application to continue this high quality work.

From the application: "CFSA currently administers six charter school programs that provide no to low cost financing for charter schools." (p e51) The specifics of these six programs are described on a charter on pages e52 and e53. These include a credit enhancement program, several loan and grant programs from the State and from the federal government.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted

**Reader's Score: 10**

**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Preference Priorities - Competitive Preference Priority 1**

1. The applicant must meet all of the requirements in (a) through (d) in order to receive the full 10 points. The requirements are:

**(a) Periodic Review and Evaluation**

The State provides for periodic review and evaluation by the authorized public chartering agency of each charter school at least once every five years, unless required more frequently by State law, to determine whether the charter school is meeting the terms of the school's charter and is meeting or exceeding the student academic performance requirements and goals for charter schools as set forth under State law or the school's charter.

**(b) Number of High-Quality Charter Schools**

The State has demonstrated progress in increasing the number of high-quality charter schools that are held accountable in the terms of the schools' charters for meeting clear and measurable objectives for the educational progress of the students attending the schools, in the period prior to the period for which the State applies for a grant under this competition.

**Note:** The Secretary encourages the applicant to include in its application an analysis of the number of charter schools meeting and exceeding State academic targets, as well as the number of charter schools that have been closed due to academic and operational performance.

**(c) One Authorized Public Chartering Agency Other Than a Local Educational Agency (LEA), or an Appeals Process**

The State -

1. Provides for one authorized public chartering agency that is not a LEA, such as a State chartering board, for each individual or entity seeking to operate a charter school pursuant to State law; or
2. In the case of a State in which LEAs are the only authorized public chartering agencies, allows for an appeals process for the denial of an application for a charter school.

**(d) High Degree of Autonomy**

The State ensures that each charter school has a high degree of autonomy over the charter school's budgets and expenditures.

**Strengths:**

California charter agencies (authorizers) must engage in mandatory oversight activities that include annual site visits and monitoring of fiscal and operational condition of the school (e17)

CA's legislature passed a Bill requiring charter schools to fulfill minimum quantifiable assessment standards before they may be renewed.(e18)

The Standards encourage the proliferation of high quality charter schools. (e 19)

California charter schools are clearly growing – now serving over 520,000 students out of 6 million in public education in the State.

P e 20 – Schools must be approved by local district where school is located but decisions can also be appealed to the

county board of education or the CA State Board of Education

According to the applicant California's Charter Act spells out the high degree of autonomy that CA charter schools enjoy (e21)

**Weaknesses:**

An Independent review noted (by RAND) did not give specific results for the growth of high performing schools – merely for the overall GROWTH of charter schools in California. The charter schools in California are “at least comparable with traditional public schools” e 19. The expectation is that this grant would help to increase the number of high quality charter schools, not simply fund average public schools.

**Reader's Score: 8**

**Competitive Preference Priorities - Competitive Preference Priority 2**

**1. The Secretary will award up to 10 points to an application under this competitive preference priority regarding the capacity of charter schools to offer public school choice in those communities with the greatest need for this choice based on:**

**1. The extent to which this applicant would target services to geographic areas in which a large proportion or number of public schools have been identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA).**

**Note: In order for a State with an approved request for ESEA flexibility to receive points under this competitive preference priority, the State should target geographic areas in which a large proportion or number of public schools have been identified as priority or focus schools or belong to a subset of other Title I schools specifically identified as low-achieving under the State s approved ESEA flexibility request (see the June 7, 2012, ESEA Flexibility document at [www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility](http://www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility)). The State should also describe how its proposed project is consistent with the efforts to serve students attending priority or focus schools described in its approved request for ESEA flexibility.**

**2. The extent to which the applicant would target services to geographic areas in which a large proportion of students perform poorly on State academic assessments; and**

**3. The extent to which the applicant would target services to communities with large proportions of low-income students.**

**Strengths:**

E 23 – This applicant has provided specific criteria for all charter schools in the State based upon academic performance. (e24)

CSFA has extensive information related to how their first two rounds of this funding has been distributed and they have clearly tracked the Academic Performance Index (API) for each funded school.

The rubric for how schools are selected to participate in this program is established (e 25) and schools that provide a school choice option in a community of greatest need receive additional points.

The existing FIG program not only targets aid to communities with large proportions of low income students but also geographic areas in which a large proportion of students perform poorly on State assessments. (e 25)

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant did not provide any specific data related to geographic areas with highest need and there is no information related to a plan to address this competitive priority. Information in this section related to improvement of performance on State assessments by schools already funded by this grant in the past.

The applicant plans to rely completely on FRPM rather than students poverty (low income) – more information related to geographic areas rather than enrollment in schools that exist is needed to meet the criteria for this section of the application.

The applicant did not mention anything about an ESEA waiver. It is not clear if the applicant is unaware of a waiver or if a waiver exists.

**Reader's Score: 7**

**Competitive Preference Priorities - Competitive Preference Priority 3**

- 1. The Secretary will award an additional 20 points to an application under a competitive preference priority for applicants that have not previously received a grant under this program.**

**Strengths:**

No strengths noted

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant has received grant awards under this program in the previous two rounds

**Reader's Score: 0**

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**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 08/04/2014 05:34 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/01/2014 11:29 AM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: California School Finance Authority (U282D140004)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Need for Project</b>		
1. Need for Facility Funding	30	20
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Quality of Plan	30	20
<b>Quality of Project Personnel</b>		
1. Grant Project Team	10	8
<b>Adequacy of Resources</b>		
1. Budget	10	9
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Project Evaluation	10	4
<b>Adequacy of Resources</b>		
1. State Experience	10	10
<b>Sub Total</b>	100	71
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priorities</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
1. CPP 1	10	7
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
1. CPP 2	10	8
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 3</b>		
1. CPP 3	20	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	40	15
<b>Total</b>	140	86

# Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Charter School Programs - Facilities - 1: 84.282D

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

Applicant: California School Finance Authority (U282D140004)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. The need for per-pupil charter school facility funding in the State.
2. The extent to which the proposal meets the need to fund charter school facilities on a per-pupil basis.

#### Strengths:

The applicant presents a clear need for per-pupil charter school funding within the state in portions of the narrative. Charter schools are able to access a variety of state-funded programs for leasing, renovating, and purchasing facilities (p. 18-19), but cannot access all of the same funding streams as can traditional public schools. Charter schools in California cannot access general obligation bonds and cannot typically access tax-exempt capital markets or local developer fee-based revenue options open to traditional public schools (p.19-20). The applicant clearly explains how these limits on access to credit and revenue create a challenge for charter schools, whose school enrollment is growing far more quickly than has that of traditional public schools within the state (p.20). Despite financial struggles within the State, the applicant lays out a picture of robust state support for charter school facilities funding, including the recent switch to fund all schools (traditional and charter) through a Local Control Funding Formula that mirrors the previous system used only for funding charters (p.15). Additionally, the applicant describes a "special advance apportionment process" (p.17) to allow new and expanding charter schools to access funds early in the year so as to pay for renovation and construction costs.

#### Weaknesses:

While there are many excellent programs and processes for facilities funding presented in the application, the applicant does not seem to demonstrate a clear need for federal funding to support the work. In fact, the share of federal funding remains nearly constant across the 5-year budget suggesting that, while the funding would supplement, rather than supplant, there may not be a clear need for the program funds.

Reader's Score: 20

### Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The likelihood that the proposed grant project will result in the State either retaining a new per-pupil facilities aid program or continuing to enhance such a program without the total amount of assistance (State and Federal) declining over a five-year period.
2. The flexibility charter schools have in their use of facility funds for the various authorized purposes.
3. The quality of the plan for identifying charter schools and determining their eligibility to receive funds.
4. The per-pupil facilities aid formula s ability to target resources to charter schools with the greatest need and the highest proportions of students in poverty.
5. For projects that plan to reserve funds for evaluation, the quality of the applicant s plan to use grant funds for this purpose.

**6. For projects that plan to reserve funds for technical assistance, dissemination, or personnel, the quality of the applicant's plan to use grant funds for these purposes.**

**7. The extent to which the proposed project is supported by strong theory (as defined in this notice).**

**Note: The applicant should review the Performance Measures section of this notice for information on the requirements for developing project-specific performance measures and targets consistent with the objectives of the program.**

**Strengths:**

California clearly has a robust State program of per-pupil facilities funding totaling nearly \$300 million in annual aid to charter schools (p.e57). The flexibility for eligible schools to use these funds for lease costs, renovation, purchase, or construction is also quite generous (p.24). The proposal is clearly a per-pupil funding project, as the applicant describes using grant program funds to extend the same kinds of programs already funded by the state to a larger pool of schools. The applicant describes awards in the amount of \$750 per student for lease related costs of \$1000 per student for purchase or construction related costs (p.24). The process of school identification and eligibility appears robust and well designed. The "preference point" formula for awarding funds seems appropriately designed to target charter schools with the greatest need serving students in poverty (p.27) and the planned amendments to the existing program regulations seem likely to enhance the efficacy of this formula (p.28). The applicant's plan for using funds for personnel to provide technical assistance seem modest and appropriate given the desire to reserve the majority of funds for sub-grants to schools (p.29).

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not clearly describe plans for evaluation of the program, and seems to address "evaluation" as the review of applications rather than as an examination of the efficacy of the program within the State. The theory behind the project is unclear to this reviewer and the logic model seems to re-state elements of the existing program design, rather than explaining the theory underlying the design. Additionally, while the applicant describes a clear plan to publicize the availability of funding (p.25), there is no clear plan for identifying and/or targeting eligible applicants within the state. The plan describes technical assistance as "including accounting and legal fees" (p.29), but does not provide any details on how technical assistance will be provided to school applicants or sub-grantees.

**Reader's Score: 20**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel**

- 1. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project manager and other members of the grant project team, including employees not paid with grant funds, consultants, and subcontractors.**
- 2. The adequacy and appropriateness of the applicant's staffing plan for the grant project.**

**Strengths:**

The two staff members for whom resumes have been provided appear well qualified for the roles, including project manager, and have strong professional experience and credentials to complete the project work described in the application (p.32). The prior experience administering this federal grant is also promising.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant describes additional support from agencies within the state, but does not provide many specifics (p.33). While there is reference made to a "project staffing and implementation plan" (p.33), but there does not seem to be a plan included in either the body of the narrative nor in the attachments.

Reader's Score: 8

### Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

1. 1. The extent to which the requested grant amount and the project costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed grant project.
2. The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of students served and to the anticipated results and benefits.
3. The extent to which the non-Federal share exceeds the minimum percentages (which are based on the percentages under section 5205(b)(2)(C) of the ESEA), particularly in the initial years of the program.

#### Strengths:

The applicant is requesting the maximum allowable award, but given the size of the state, the number of charter schools, and the described need, this seems a reasonable request (p. 35). The applicant also has a history of two previous grant awards and successful implementation thereof that seem to justify their request. Additionally, the state matching contribution exceeds the minimum required and the requested administrative and indirect costs are both within the reasonable limits. State funding increases incrementally over the grant period, from \$267 million to \$370 million. The federal grant is never more than 4% of the total per pupil facilities aid (p.e57).

#### Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide a detailed account of how many students the proposed project is expected to affect.

Reader's Score: 9

### Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project.
2. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which
  - i. The methods of evaluation are thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project.
  - ii. The methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.
  - iii. The methods of evaluation will provide valid and reliable performance data on relevant outcomes.

#### Strengths:

The applicant describes a history of results that suggest an effective program (p.36).

#### Weaknesses:

The applicant does not clearly describe a plan to evaluate its program, other than to suggest that past performance will be replicated with additional funds. The evaluation narrative does not refer nor seem to connect to the Project Goals described on p. 30. There is insufficient information to award additional points here.

Reader's Score: 4

### Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

1. The experience of the State in addressing the facility needs of charter schools through various means, including providing per-pupil aid, access to State loan or bonding pools, and the use of Qualified Zone Academy Bonds.

#### Strengths:

The applicant has a great deal of experience addressing the facilities needs of charter schools and was, in fact, created for this express purpose (p.37). Additionally, the applicant has a strong history of success with the State Charter School Facilities Incentive Grants Program, having previously received two rounds of funding (p.38).

#### Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

### Priority Questions

#### Competitive Preference Priorities - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. The applicant must meet all of the requirements in (a) through (d) in order to receive the full 10 points. The requirements are:

##### (a) Periodic Review and Evaluation

The State provides for periodic review and evaluation by the authorized public chartering agency of each charter school at least once every five years, unless required more frequently by State law, to determine whether the charter school is meeting the terms of the school's charter and is meeting or exceeding the student academic performance requirements and goals for charter schools as set forth under State law or the school's charter.

##### (b) Number of High-Quality Charter Schools

The State has demonstrated progress in increasing the number of high-quality charter schools that are held accountable in the terms of the schools' charters for meeting clear and measurable objectives for the educational progress of the students attending the schools, in the period prior to the period for which the State applies for a grant under this competition.

**Note:** The Secretary encourages the applicant to include in its application an analysis of the number of charter schools meeting and exceeding State academic targets, as well as the number of charter schools that have been closed due to academic and operational performance.

##### (c) One Authorized Public Chartering Agency Other Than a Local Educational Agency (LEA), or an Appeals Process

The State -

1. Provides for one authorized public chartering agency that is not a LEA, such as a State chartering board, for each individual or entity seeking to operate a charter school pursuant to State law; or
2. In the case of a State in which LEAs are the only authorized public chartering agencies, allows for an appeals process for the denial of an application for a charter school.

##### (d) High Degree of Autonomy

The State ensures that each charter school has a high degree of autonomy over the charter school's budgets and expenditures.

**Strengths:**

The applicant clearly explained justification for a, c, and d. The State of California has a clear process for periodic review and evaluation of charter schools, including a minimum score requirement on the statewide Academic Performance Index (API) for charter school renewal (p.3). Each charter school applicant may apply to the local school district governing body for where it is geographically located, and if its petition is denied, it may then appeal to either the county board of education or the State Board of Education, providing a clear appeals process for charter schools (p.6). Finally, the applicant described the “mega waiver” in the California Charter Act and the new Local Control Funding Formula which both provide charter schools with a high degree of autonomy over their budgets and expenditures (p.7).

**Weaknesses:**

Despite thorough answers on three of the elements of the Competitive Preference, the applicant did not provide sufficient data on the number or proportion of high quality charter schools within the state. Though the applicant cites a RAND study noting that California’s charter schools perform on par with public schools in the state (p.5), there is no data provided to illustrate the portfolio of quality charter schools within the state.

**Reader's Score:**     **7**

**Competitive Preference Priorities - Competitive Preference Priority 2**

**1. The Secretary will award up to 10 points to an application under this competitive preference priority regarding the capacity of charter schools to offer public school choice in those communities with the greatest need for this choice based on:**

**1. The extent to which this applicant would target services to geographic areas in which a large proportion or number of public schools have been identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA).**

**Note: In order for a State with an approved request for ESEA flexibility to receive points under this competitive preference priority, the State should target geographic areas in which a large proportion or number of public schools have been identified as priority or focus schools or belong to a subset of other Title I schools specifically identified as low-achieving under the State s approved ESEA flexibility request (see the June 7, 2012, ESEA Flexibility document at [www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility](http://www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility)). The State should also describe how its proposed project is consistent with the efforts to serve students attending priority or focus schools described in its approved request for ESEA flexibility.**

**2. The extent to which the applicant would target services to geographic areas in which a large proportion of students perform poorly on State academic assessments; and**

**3. The extent to which the applicant would target services to communities with large proportions of low-income students.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant has previously administered State Charter School Facilities Incentive Grants Program funding and clearly describes the “preference points” system through which it has awarded funding in the past, prioritizing charter schools succeeding, as measured by the API and AYP criteria, within a specified geographic distance from low-performing or over-crowded schools (p.9). In order to strengthen their ability to fund successful charter schools in geographic areas of need, the applicant is planning amendments to existing Program Guidelines and has built the process of such changes into their project timeline (p.9-10).

**Weaknesses:**

In describing existing Program regulations, the applicant refers to some preference points for which the definitions seem unclear, such as “community of greatest need” (p.11). It would be helpful to understand what thresholds sub-grantees would need to meet for these preference points.

**Reader's Score: 8**

**Competitive Preference Priorities - Competitive Preference Priority 3**

- 1. The Secretary will award an additional 20 points to an application under a competitive preference priority for applicants that have not previously received a grant under this program.**

**Strengths:**

No strengths recognized.

**Weaknesses:**

California has received two previous grants.

**Reader's Score: 0**

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**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 08/01/2014 11:29 AM