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

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 06/15/2018 11:31 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Alliance for Progress Charter School (U282E180016)
Reader #1: **********

		Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students			
1. Disadvantaged Students		15	13
Quality of Project Design			
1. Project Design		30	30
Quality of Project Personnel			
1. Project Personnel		10	10
Quality of the Management Plan			
1. Management Plan		10	9
Quality of the Eligible Applicant			
1. Eligible Applicant		20	13
Continuation Plan			
1. Continuation Plan		15	12
	Sub Total	100	87
Priority Questions			
Competitive Preference Priority 1			
Access to High-Quality Educational Choice			
1. Increasing Access		2	1
	Sub Total	2	1
Competitive Preference Priority 2			
Dual or Concurrent Enrollment Programs			
1. Enrollment Programs		2	0
	Sub Total	2	0
	Total	104	88

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - CSP Developers (84.282E) - 2: 84.282E

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

Applicant: Alliance for Progress Charter School (U282E180016)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students

1. **The significance of the contribution the proposed project will make in expanding educational Opportunities for educationally disadvantaged students and enabling those students to meet challenging State academic standards. In determining the significance of the contribution the proposed project will make, the Secretary considers the quality of the plan to ensure that the charter school the applicant proposes to replicate or expand will recruit and enroll educationally disadvantaged students and serve those students at rates comparable to surrounding public schools.**

Strengths:

The school plans to expand enrollment for grades K-8 by one classroom per year, beginning with kindergarten in 2017-18 (e19). This expansion will provide access to a high quality educational option (e22) for 200 additional students (e33), including a high number of educationally disadvantaged students. School serves 99% students of color, and 70% economically disadvantaged, in addition to 13% students with disabilities (e19). School actively recruits educationally disadvantaged students (e21). School has been rated “model school” for Climate for the last three years on the School Progress Reports, demonstrating ability to create a safe, respectful learning environment (e43) in a neighborhood that experiences a 40% poverty rate (e21).

School has adopted curricula that align with state standards, providing course sequences that are coherent and efficient (e44). School consistently outperforms district and peer schools, with PSSA Proficiency at 52% for the school compared to 35% for the district in English, and 22% for the school and 20% for the district in Math. In Science, the school achieved 47% proficiency, compared to the district at 33% (e23). Economically disadvantaged students outperformed District and State on PSSA English assessments (2016-17 School=53%, District=32%, State=46%) (e90).

Weaknesses:

Information regarding alignment to state standards is not provided. School is demonstrating slow progress toward academic achievement on PSSA assessments in math (2014-15=17%, 2015-16=20%, 2016-17=22%) and trends are comparable to the district (2014-15=17%, 2015-16=19%, 2016-17=20%). School dropped in proficiency scores for Science in the most recent year tested (2014-15=53%, 2015-16=59%, 2016-17=47%), while peer schools increased in proficiency in 2016-17 (peer schools 2015-16=20%, 2016-17=24%) (e23). Economically disadvantaged students outperformed District on PSSA Math and Science assessments but did not do as well as the State (2016-17 Math/School=24%, District=18%, State=29%) (2016-17 Science/School=45%, District=32%, State=47%) (e90).

Reader's Score: **13**

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 30

Sub Question

1. **(1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable**

Strengths:

School describes four main goals for the project: grow enrollment, implement 1:1 ratio for technology, increase educational outcomes for all students, and maintain a positive, inclusive learning environment (e24). Related measurable benchmarks and timelines are provided (e24-e28). Benchmarks cover many goals, from enrollment targets (496 in 2018-19 to 571 in 2021-22), academic goals (57% proficient by 2018-19 through 80% proficient by 2021-22), and improving student retention rates (91% in 2018-19 to 94% in 2021-22). These goals are specific, measurable, and appropriate for the project plan.

School will use grant funds to furnish new classrooms, purchase equipment and technology to support enrollment growth, and hire additional staff members (e28).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 15

2. **(2) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs**

Strengths:

School plan includes benchmarks and goals to improve academic achievement for the target population by subgroup so that progress may be measured every year (e24-28). For example, school plans that 50% economically disadvantaged students will score proficient or better on math exams by setting progressively higher goals (24% in 2016-17 to 27% in 2018-19, and progressing to 50% in 2021-22) (e26).

School will provide access to technology for a population of students living in 40% poverty, with a goal to offer nearly 1:1 devices by the end of the grant term (71% student/device ratio) (e40-e41).

School plan includes adding staff members and providing training to support high-needs students, including students with disabilities, English Learners, and African American students (e58-e59).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 15

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 project personnel, the Secretary considers:**

Reader's Score: 10

Sub Question

1. **(1) 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**

Strengths:

School reports that 35% of staff members are people of color. School actively recruits staff with diverse backgrounds and experiences, and participates in job fairs at historically black colleges and universities (e33).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 1

2. **(2) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel**

Strengths:

Resumes and narratives for key personnel demonstrate depth of experience and training related to the project (e29-e33, e63-e84). CEO has been with the school since 2009 and will serve as project director (e29). School states that the CEO has experience “implementing effective programs in urban areas” (e29). Another key staff member served as CEO of the school for five years and then returned at a later date to support academic programming (e29). Most key personnel have advanced degrees in education and have been with the school an average of 5 years (e29-e33). Key personnel have relevant and comprehensive experiences that give the reviewer confidence that they are prepared to lead and manage the grant project.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 9

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.**

Strengths:

School provides a fully developed enrollment plan (e33), including projections through the end of the next charter renewal term, SY2025-26. Projections call for incremental growth from 471 students in 2017-18 to 671 students in 2015-16. School provides a staffing plan that aligns with the enrollment growth (e34). School plans for an increase in staffing for special education students as enrollment grows and has hired an ELL certified teacher to be prepared for future needs, even though the school currently has no English Learners (e34). Grant funds will be used for supplies and equipment to furnish classrooms and to support increase in staffing as enrollment grows (e6). Project plan details major activities, timeline, and personnel responsible (e38-e40). Major activities are appropriate to the project goals, including recruiting for increased enrollment, hiring additional staff, purchasing equipment, organizing professional development for new staff members, and collecting data related to project goals.

Weaknesses:

Project plan (e38-e40) includes specific activities and general timelines but the budget narrative (e209-e213) does not provide sufficient detail regarding costs. With the information provided, it is not possible to state that the project can be

completed within budget.

Reader's Score: 9

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Eligible Applicant

1. **The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that the charter school to be replicated or expanded is a high-quality charter school, including:**

   (1) The degree to which the applicant has demonstrated success in increasing academic achievement, including graduation rates where applicable, for all students and for each of the subgroups of students described in section 1111(c)(2) of the ESEA, attending the charter schools the applicant operates or manages. These subgroups of students include: Economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, children with disabilities, and students who are ELs.

   (2) The extent to which the academic achievement results (including annual student performance on statewide assessments and annual student attendance and retention rates, and where applicable and available, student academic growth, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates) for educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant have exceeded the average academic achievement results for such students in the State.

   (3) The extent to which charter schools operated or managed by the applicant have been closed; have had a charter revoked due to noncompliance with statutory or regulatory requirements; have had their affiliation with the applicant revoked or terminated, including through voluntary disaffiliation; have had any significant issues in the area of financial or operational management; have experienced significant problems with statutory or regulatory compliance that could lead to revocation of the school's charter; and have had any significant issues with respect to student safety.

Strengths:

School has demonstrated success with the current population, out-performing peer and district schools for the past three years (e89) in English, Math, and Science on PSSA tests. Student attendance rates at the school are higher than the district and state averages, for all students as well as for the subgroups listed (African American, Economically Disadvantaged, and Students with Disabilities) (e52).

Charter Renewal Report lists the school as "1st of 20" in Peer Rank on the 2015-16 School Performance Framework (e185).

School received no Audit findings in past five years (e37).

Weaknesses:

School is not outperforming state averages on PSSA tests in English, Math, and Science for ALL students (e89), for Educationally Disadvantaged students (e90), or for Students with Disabilities (e91).

2016-17 Charter Renewal Report identifies several concerns. In Organizational Compliance, the report states that use of technology is inconsistently reflected in school operations and programming (e193). In Special Education, the school required an improvement plan in 2014 regarding Least Restrictive Environment (e194), 18% of school staff reported no time for collaboration to support students with special needs, and the ratio of proficiency for students with IEPs falls below the threshold (e195). Under Student Enrollment, the school is rated as "approaching standard", and the report states that enrollment materials require prohibited information (social security information and IEP, report card, student records, medical records in order to enroll) (e197). In the area of Student Discipline, the report listed the Code of Conduct as a concern, allowing for expulsion for repeated minor or nonviolent offenses and failing to articulate required questions for a manifestation hearing (e198). Under Board Governance, the report indicates the FY15 budget was not approved by the Board according to the minutes and purpose of executive session was not identified in minutes (e199). Most significantly, the overall rating for Financial Health and Sustainability is "approaches standard", with concerns listed related to the school's landlord, real estate tax liens, and late payments for the state employee retirement plan (e207).

Reader's Score: **13**

Selection Criteria - Continuation Plan

1. **The extent to which the eligible applicant is prepared to continue to operate charter schools that would receive grant funds in a manner consistent with the eligible applicant's application once the grant funds under this program are no longer available.**

   Strengths:

   Project goals include one-time purchases related to expanding enrollment and initial staffing to support growth (e52). School plans that future enrollment growth will sustain personnel costs after the grant expires (e52). Key personnel have experience and preparation to successfully lead the project (e29-e33, e63-e84).

   School is making plans to consolidate facilities to save an estimated $8,000 per month (e37).

   Weaknesses:

   Concerns related to Financial Health and Sustainability disclosed in the 2016-17 Charter Renewal Report may impact future viability if not resolved (e207).

Reader's Score: **12**

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Access to High-Quality Educational Choice

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 1—Supporting High-Need Students by Increasing Access to High-Quality Educational Choice**

   This priority is for projects that are designed to increase access to educational choice and improve academic outcomes and learning environments for one or more of the following groups of students:

   (i) Students in communities served by rural local educational agencies
   (ii) Children with disabilities
   (iii) English learners
   (iv) Students who are members of federally recognized Indian Tribes.

   Note: 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:

   School has 13% students with disabilities (e19), which is comparable to the local district average of 14% (e20). Students with disabilities at the school outperformed District students with disabilities on PSSA 2016-17 assessments in English and Math (English/School=13%, District=10%; Math/School=13%, District=9%) (e91).

   Weaknesses:

   Serving students with disabilities is not a primary focus of the program and school does not have significant percentages of any of the other groups of students. Students with disabilities at the school did not match proficiency of State average for students with disabilities on PSSA 2016-17 assessments (English/School=13%, State=25%; Math/School=13%, State=18%; Science/School=8%, State=32%) (e91).

Reader's Score: **1**

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Dual or Concurrent Enrollment Programs

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 2—Dual or Concurrent Enrollment Programs and Early College High Schools**

   The extent to which the proposed project is designed to increase student access to, participation in, and completion of dual or concurrent enrollment programs or early college high schools.

   Strengths:

   No strengths noted.

   Weaknesses:

   This criterion is not addressed.

Reader's Score: **0**

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Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 06/20/2018 07:30 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Alliance for Progress Charter School (U282E180016)
Reader #2: **********

		Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students			
1. Disadvantaged Students		15	15
Quality of Project Design			
1. Project Design		30	30
Quality of Project Personnel			
1. Project Personnel		10	10
Quality of the Management Plan			
1. Management Plan		10	8
Quality of the Eligible Applicant			
1. Eligible Applicant		20	16
Continuation Plan			
1. Continuation Plan		15	12
	Sub Total	100	91
Priority Questions			
Competitive Preference Priority 1			
Access to High-Quality Educational Choice			
1. Increasing Access		2	2
	Sub Total	2	2
Competitive Preference Priority 2			
Dual or Concurrent Enrollment Programs			
1. Enrollment Programs		2	0
	Sub Total	2	0
	Total	104	93

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - CSP Developers (84.282E) - 2: 84.282E

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

Applicant: Alliance for Progress Charter School (U282E180016)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students

1. **The significance of the contribution the proposed project will make in expanding educational Opportunities for educationally disadvantaged students and enabling those students to meet challenging State academic standards. In determining the significance of the contribution the proposed project will make, the Secretary considers the quality of the plan to ensure that the charter school the applicant proposes to replicate or expand will recruit and enroll educationally disadvantaged students and serve those students at rates comparable to surrounding public schools.**

Strengths:

The applicant describes a student population that consists of 99% students of color, 70% economically disadvantaged, and 13% special education students, enrollment rates which are higher than or comparable to similar public schools in Philadelphia (p. e22, e184). The applicant notes that performance on the state PSSA assessment well above peer and district schools in reading and slightly above the proficiency rates of peer and district schools in math (p. e22). Also noted by the applicant are attendance rates of 93% for students attending school for 90%+ days, compared to the district percentage of 49% for 90+ days.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted in the applicant's response.

Reader's Score: **15**

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: **30**

Sub Question

1. **(1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable**

Strengths:

The applicant lists four broad goals (serving more students, implementing 1:1 technology ratio in every grade, increasing outcomes through a robust and nurturing environment, and maintaining a positive, nurturing, and inclusive school environment) and then presents five objectives in the SMART format elated to the four goals. The objectives each have at least one outcome measure, baseline data, annual benchmarks, and the data source where the performance measures will be documented (p. e24-28). The outcome measures are specific, quantifiable, and directly linked to the objective to be achieved.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted in the applicant's response.

Reader's Score: 15

2. **(2) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs**

Strengths:

The applicant describes how the design of the project will address the needs of the target population, including providing staff development that will allow teachers to have intensive training in teaching the curriculum and subject matter content; hiring additional staff including reading and math specialists, classroom assistants, and a social worker; and continued professional development for teachers to enhance social-emotional culture and climate. In addition, the school will purchase the additional technology needed to accomplish the technology objectives listed (p. e28).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted in the applicant's response.

Reader's Score: 15

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 project personnel, the Secretary considers:**

Reader's Score: 10

Sub Question

1. **(1) 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**

Strengths:

The applicant states that AFPCS actively recruits staff with diverse backgrounds and experiences, including attending career fairs at historically black colleges. The applicant notes that in 2017-18, 35% of the school's staff are people of color (p. e33).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted in the applicant's response.

Reader's Score: 1

2. **(2) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel**

Strengths:

The applicant lists nine staff members who will be key project personnel in the implementation of grant activities. The personnel listed range from the campus principal, curriculum directors, planning directors, and student support, climate, and operations directors. The broad range of responsibilities linked to the project team match the comprehensive nature of the plan and match the management tasks indicated by the project design.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted in the applicant's response.

Reader's Score: 9

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.**

Strengths:

The management plan lists major activities linked to the project objectives previously described and identify an “owner” of the activity, support personnel that will assist, and timelines for accomplishment (p. e 38-40). The major activities are specific in their detail and provide a clear strategy to accomplish the project objectives.

Weaknesses:

The management plan does not include budgeted amounts to achieve each of the major activities (p. e38-40), so it is difficult to determine if the activities are being accomplished within the budget as described in the budget narrative (p. e209-213).

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Eligible Applicant

1. **The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that the charter school to be replicated or expanded is a high-quality charter school, including:**

(1) The degree to which the applicant has demonstrated success in increasing academic achievement, including graduation rates where applicable, for all students and for each of the subgroups of students described in section 1111(c)(2) of the ESEA, attending the charter schools the applicant operates or manages. These subgroups of students include: Economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, children with disabilities, and students who are ELs.

(2) The extent to which the academic achievement results (including annual student performance on statewide assessments and annual student attendance and retention rates, and where applicable and available, student academic growth, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates) for educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant have exceeded the average academic achievement results for such students in the State.

(3) The extent to which charter schools operated or managed by the applicant have been closed; have had a charter revoked due to noncompliance with statutory or regulatory requirements; have had their affiliation with the applicant revoked or terminated, including through voluntary disaffiliation; have had any significant issues in the area of financial or operational management; have experienced significant problems with statutory or regulatory compliance that could lead to revocation of the school’s charter; and have had any significant issues with respect to student safety.

Strengths:

The school exceeds the proficiency rates for district and peer schools for four years (2012-13 through 2015-16) and other charter schools for 13-14 and 15-16 on the 3-8 math PSSA assessment; for all schools for the same year span on the 3-8 reading PSSA assessment, and has proficiency rates above all schools on the 3-8 science PSSA assessment except for other charters on the 2012-13 science assessment (p. e190-191). The charter recently completed a renewal process and there is no evidence of statutory or regulatory issues that could lead to the revocation of the charter or with respect to

children's safety.

Weaknesses:

According to the state's renewal monitoring instrument, the growth index standard was not met for 8th grade science in 12-13 and 13-14; not met in 4th grade science in 12-13 through 14-15; and not met in math in 15-16 (p. e191). In regards to compliance in special education, the school was required to develop a corrective action plan in the area of least restrictive environment in 2014. The compliance document also noted that proficiency ratios for students with and without IEPs in math, reading, and science fall outside of the 1/3 threshold required by the state (p. e195). The school was also cited for not having at least 7 board members in 2013-14; the 2015 fiscal year budget was not approved by the board; the school did not identify the purpose of an executive session in the board minutes.

Reader's Score: 16

Selection Criteria - Continuation Plan

1. **The extent to which the eligible applicant is prepared to continue to operate charter schools that would receive grant funds in a manner consistent with the eligible applicant's application once the grant funds under this program are no longer available.**

Strengths:

The applicant notes on page e52 that the school will be able to sustain operations through public funding from the per pupil allocation of the Philadelphia district as well as from federal Title and IDEA funds. Professional development needed by new staff hired after the end of the grant period will be managed by AFPCS leadership.

Weaknesses:

The applicant had some difficulty with fiscal controls, most notably failure to adopt a budget in fy2015 (p. e199) as well as five instances of missing required state payments of approximately $52,000 to the state employee retirement system (p. e207). These lack of controls and issues of non-compliance make it reasonable to assume that strong fiduciary oversight will be needed to ensure that the continuation of grant activities will not be compromised.

Reader's Score: 12

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Access to High-Quality Educational Choice

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 1—Supporting High-Need Students by Increasing Access to High-Quality Educational Choice**

This priority is for projects that are designed to increase access to educational choice and improve academic outcomes and learning environments for one or more of the following groups of students:

(i) Students in communities served by rural local educational agencies
(ii) Children with disabilities
(iii) English learners
(iv) Students who are members of federally recognized Indian Tribes.

Note: 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 that in regards to children with disabilities, the school ensures a least restrictive environment for exceptional learners, individualized interventions, small-group instruction, different levels of academic resources as

needed, and increased instructional time as necessary. There is coordination between regular education and special education staff which is used to facilitate classroom interventions for exceptional learners (p. e21).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted in the applicant's response.

Reader's Score: **2**

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Dual or Concurrent Enrollment Programs

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 2—Dual or Concurrent Enrollment Programs and Early College High Schools**

   The extent to which the proposed project is designed to increase student access to, participation in, and completion of dual or concurrent enrollment programs or early college high schools.

   Strengths:

   The applicant did not address this competitive preference priority.

   Weaknesses:

   The applicant did not address this competitive preference priority.

Reader's Score: **0**

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Alliance for Progress Charter School (U282E180016)
Reader #3: **********

		Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students			
1. Disadvantaged Students		15	15
Quality of Project Design			
1. Project Design		30	30
Quality of Project Personnel			
1. Project Personnel		10	10
Quality of the Management Plan			
1. Management Plan		10	9
Quality of the Eligible Applicant			
1. Eligible Applicant		20	19
Continuation Plan			
1. Continuation Plan		15	15
	Sub Total	100	98
Priority Questions			
Competitive Preference Priority 1			
Access to High-Quality Educational Choice			
1. Increasing Access		2	2
	Sub Total	2	2
Competitive Preference Priority 2			
Dual or Concurrent Enrollment Programs			
1. Enrollment Programs		2	0
	Sub Total	2	0
	Total	104	100

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - CSP Developers (84.282E) - 2: 84.282E

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

Applicant: Alliance for Progress Charter School (U282E180016)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students

1. **The significance of the contribution the proposed project will make in expanding educational Opportunities for educationally disadvantaged students and enabling those students to meet challenging State academic standards. In determining the significance of the contribution the proposed project will make, the Secretary considers the quality of the plan to ensure that the charter school the applicant proposes to replicate or expand will recruit and enroll educationally disadvantaged students and serve those students at rates comparable to surrounding public schools.**

Strengths:

AFPCS provides data to show that it predominantly serves students from educationally disadvantaged groups. In 2017-18, AFPCS served 471 students total – of which 99% are students of color, 70% are considered economically disadvantaged, and 13% receive special education services (e19). They also provide assurance that enrollment rates of educationally disadvantaged students are higher than or comparable to similar public schools in Philadelphia (e19).

As a school and community serving historically underserved students, AFPCS recognizes that it must promote excellence through continuous learning, critical thinking, hands-on investment, and community activism (e22).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: **15**

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: **30**

Sub Question

1. **(1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable**

Strengths:

With funding from the CSP, AFPCS seeks to support an enrollment increase of one additional classroom (25 students) in each grade (K-8), beginning with kindergarten in the 2017-18 year for a total enrollment of 671 by 2025-26 (e23). Funding will support expansion and continued development of staff such that AFPCS will be the leading technology-rich public school option in the city (e19).

AFPCS identifies four main goals for its expansion: to grow to serve more students, to implement a 1:1 technology

Sub Question

ratio in every grade, to continue to increase educational outcomes for all students through a robust instructional program and nurturing school environment, and to maintain a positive, nurturing, and inclusive school climate (e24). To meet these goals, the applicant does an excellent job at identifying 5 project objectives with several specific performance measures for each, along with baseline data, annual benchmarks, and data sources (e24-28).

A detailed logic model is presented on e58-59 which includes measurable short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes that align with the four year grant period.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 15

2. **(2) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs**

Strengths:

The project goals and objectives are targeted to educationally disadvantaged students and there is a heavy emphasis placed on raising student proficiency rates for African American, economically disadvantaged, and special education students on ELA and math exams (e24-28).

To achieve project goals, AFPCS will continue to provide teachers with intensive training and coaching, and will also hire additional reading specialists, math interventionists, classroom assistants, and a social worker (e28). To complement these efforts already underway, AFPCS seeks CSP funding to support setup of classrooms and offices necessary to serve additional students (equipment, technology, and supplies); on-boarding key staff positions a year earlier than the school would otherwise be able to; and continued PD for teachers focused on academic and social-emotional culture and climate (e28).

While not required in this criteria, the applicant includes a detailed description of its facilities plan to house all students at full expansion capacity (e36-37). This provides further indication that the applicant has carefully planned for this expansion and considered the full scope of work (beyond what is required in this application).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 15

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 project personnel, the Secretary considers:**

Reader's Score: 10

Sub Question

1. **(1) 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**

Sub Question

Strengths:

Thirty-five percent of AFPCS staff are people of color, and AFPCS actively recruits staff with diverse backgrounds and experiences, including attending career fairs at historically black colleges and universities (e33).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 1

2. **(2) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel**

Strengths:

The applicant provides descriptions of 8 key project personnel (e29-e33) and their resumes in Appendix B (e63-84). Staff has vast and relevant experience in operations and management, strategic planning, instruction, talent development and coaching, special education and student support services, and school climate.

The roles and responsibilities of the Board and CEO are also provided on e35-36.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 9

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.**

Strengths:

AFPCS has considered the urgency to grow and serve more students while also maintaining program cohesion and operational quality. For this reason, they decided to strategically grow only one new classroom per year (e33). An enrollment rollout table is provided on e33.

The applicant effectively distinguishes between what additional staffing to support growth would look like with current funding but without the CSP grant vs. with the CSP grant (e34-35). In doing so, the application provides evidence that AFPCS has thoroughly thought through this plan and the most appropriate use of funds. With the addition of CSP funds, the school will be able to hire additional staff 1-2 years earlier than it would be able to otherwise: 1 assistant climate director, 3 teachers (art, special education, and autism support), and 1 counselor (e35). Adding staff positions early increases likelihood that AFPCS will have continuity of culture as it expands.

The applicant provides a detailed project plan on e38-e40 that includes major activities, owners and support staff, timelines; furthermore, the overarching plan objectives (i.e. “hire staff and support establishment of added classrooms and offices”) align with their project design and is cohesive with the overall application narrative.

Strengthening an already strong management plan is a very detailed budget narrative in the appendix (e209-213) that summarizes yearly costs with a brief description and also provides a very detailed accounting of all projected expenses under the grant across all four years – from the costs associated with hiring an art teacher, to the cost of student desks, gym equipment, classroom rugs, document cameras, and curriculum, to name just a small number of the line items included.

Weaknesses:

The management plan table (e38-e40) would have been strengthened if it included benchmarks or milestones toward specific project activities. For example, one activity is “recruit and hire additional staff for Year 3” but no specific benchmarks/milestones are included to assess success along the way.

The professional development section of the management plan (e39) could have been more specific and targeted. Instead, it repeats “organize, develop, and deliver PD on [content area]” five different times and timeline included is “ongoing/annually”, which is vague.

Reader's Score: 9

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Eligible Applicant

1. **The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that the charter school to be replicated or expanded is a high-quality charter school, including:**

   (1) The degree to which the applicant has demonstrated success in increasing academic achievement, including graduation rates where applicable, for all students and for each of the subgroups of students described in section 1111(c)(2) of the ESEA, attending the charter schools the applicant operates or manages. These subgroups of students include: Economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, children with disabilities, and students who are ELs.

   (2) The extent to which the academic achievement results (including annual student performance on statewide assessments and annual student attendance and retention rates, and where applicable and available, student academic growth, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates) for educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant have exceeded the average academic achievement results for such students in the State.

   (3) The extent to which charter schools operated or managed by the applicant have been closed; have had a charter revoked due to noncompliance with statutory or regulatory requirements; have had their affiliation with the applicant revoked or terminated, including through voluntary disaffiliation; have had any significant issues in the area of financial or operational management; have experienced significant problems with statutory or regulatory compliance that could lead to revocation of the school’s charter; and have had any significant issues with respect to student safety.

Strengths:

In 2017, AFPCS was the only charter school renewed by the School District of Philadelphia without additional conditions (e19). The school opened in 1998 and has been renewed every time it was up for renewal (e40-41).

AFPCS holds high expectations for students, and high academic performance is their focus that drives everything they do (e42). Teachers work as a team to develop independent learners and use small group techniques to teach problem solving, cooperation, and higher-order thinking. Staff also work closely with parents and community members to be responsive to needs of students (e42).

AFPCS is operated under a code of shared values that identify 10 character traits reinforced through class and school climates and management techniques (e43). AFPCS creates a caring, non-violent school community through service learning projects, clear and consistent communication of expectations, and a schoolwide behavior system that is developmentally appropriate. Results of this work are reflected in the school’s safe school report where in 2016-17, less than 10% of students were involved in discipline issues (e43). AFPCS also received a “Model” rating for last three years in climate category of district progress reports (e43). AFPCS uses a research-based socio-emotional learning curriculum, Second Steps (e43).

AFPCS focuses on individualized learning and monitors the performance of all students through multiple academic diagnostic and benchmark assessments that inform their Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) program (e21).

Over the last five years, AFPCS significantly outperformed district and peer schools on the Pennsylvania System of

School Assessment (PSSA) in English, math, and science. A table with performance data is provided on e22-23. Performance in English and Math at AFPCS grew over the last three years of data provided, between 2014-15 and 2016-17 (e22). AFPCS also outperforms for subgroups of educationally disadvantaged students, specifically African American, economically disadvantaged, and IEP students (e49).

AFPCS did an excellent job of coherently presenting the performance of students in 2016-17 in each core testing subject for all students and the three major student subgroups (e50-52). AFPCS consistently outperformed the district for all students and subgroups ELA and math. While they do not always outperform the state average, their student population is more disadvantaged than the state's as a whole. Lastly, AFPCS also outperforms the district and state in student attendance rates for all students and for subgroups (e51-52). The applicant also provides testing data for the last three years for all students and subgroups in Appendix E (e89-e92) that demonstrates year over year growth in ELA and math.

AFPCS' instructional program is data-driven, inquiry-based, differentiated, and enhanced by technology, with computers for all 50% of students (225 devices for 471 students). AFPCS wants to become a 1:1 learning environment, one of the few in the city (e23).

AFPCS received no audit findings from external auditors in the past five years, and operates under a comprehensive internal controls policy that includes procedures all aspects of finances such as budget preparation, purchase requests, authorized check signers, etc. These internal controls are designed to safeguard assets and help to detect losses from employee dishonesty or error. AFPCS also works with an on-site back office provider for financial planning services, OmniVest LLC (e37). AFPCS has not had any significant compliance or management issues in last three years, including in school safety or finance (e92).

AFPCS provides a detailed description of rigorous courses and curriculum focusing on language arts, math, science, history/social studies, technology, and physical education that align with PA Core Standards and are matrixed to build vertically and reinforce content horizontally (e44-48). The course and curricula description further scaffolds the school's excellent academic results, presented on e49-e52.

Weaknesses:

IEP students at AFPCS underperform in science proficiency relative to district and state averages (e51), and performance in science has gone down overall for all students since 2015-16 (e89).

Reader's Score: 19

Selection Criteria - Continuation Plan

1. **The extent to which the eligible applicant is prepared to continue to operate charter schools that would receive grant funds in a manner consistent with the eligible applicant's application once the grant funds under this program are no longer available.**

Strengths:

CSP funds will be used for one-time equipment and implementation costs related to enrollment expansion, along with staff positions. As enrollment grows, AFPCS expects to be able to financially sustain operations and staffing through per pupil funding as well as IDEA and Title I dollars (e52).

Other areas of the application (see e34-35 specifically) indicate that the applicant has planned extensively for this expansion and considered sustainability of project costs over the long term.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: **15**

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Access to High-Quality Educational Choice

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 1—Supporting High-Need Students by Increasing Access to High-Quality Educational Choice**

   This priority is for projects that are designed to increase access to educational choice and improve academic outcomes and learning environments for one or more of the following groups of students:

   (i) Students in communities served by rural local educational agencies
   (ii) Children with disabilities
   (iii) English learners
   (iv) Students who are members of federally recognized Indian Tribes.

   Note: 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:

   AFPCS provides data to show that it predominantly serves students from educationally disadvantaged groups: in 2017-18, AFPCS served 99% students of color, 70% economically disadvantaged, and 13% special education students (e19). By expanding enrollment, the school will provide additional students from these subgroups with access to a high-quality option that regularly outperforms district and peer schools (e19).

   AFPCS expects special education enrollment to continue to be consistent with or slightly higher than the district average of 14% (e20). AFPCS' policy is to educate special education students in the least restrictive environment possible. Students receive interventions and supports tailored to their individual needs, including small group instruction, tutoring, working with different levels of academic resources, and increased instructional time (e21). The Director of Student Services, special education teachers, and general education teachers meet regularly to discuss student results, set goals, examine progress, and identify interventions (e21).

   AFPCS is located in a north Philadelphia neighborhood with only one district school option and a poverty rate above 40%, according to a 2017 report by Pew (e20). And with nearly identical demographics, AFPCS significantly outperforms the neighborhood school on state assessments and daily attendance rates (e20).

   AFPCS is in demand, and in 2017-18 it received 136 applications for 75 kindergarten seats and over 30 applications each for grades 1-5 for less than 5 available seats in each grade (e20).

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: **2**

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Dual or Concurrent Enrollment Programs

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 2—Dual or Concurrent Enrollment Programs and Early College High Schools**

   The extent to which the proposed project is designed to increase student access to, participation in, and completion of dual or concurrent enrollment programs or early college high schools.

Strengths:

No strengths identified.

Weaknesses:

CPP #2 not addressed by applicant. No evidence that AFPCS has dual or concurrent enrollment or early college high school programs.

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted

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