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

**Applicant:** MOBILE AREA EDUCATION FOUNDATION (U282B180059)  
**Reader #2:** ********

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**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Preference Priority 1**

| Access to High Quality Educational Choice      |         |         |
| 1. Increasing Access                          | 4        | 4       |
| **Sub Total**                                  | 4        | 4       |

**Competitive Preference Priority 2**

| Dual or Concurrent Enrollment Programs         |         |         |
| 1. Enrollment Programs                        | 4        | 4       |
| **Sub Total**                                  | 4        | 4       |

| Total                                         | 108      | 93     |
Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - CSP Developers (84.282B) - 1: 84.282B

Reader #2: *********
Applicant: MOBILE AREA EDUCATION FOUNDATION (U282B180059)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Contribution in Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged

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 open will recruit and enroll educationally disadvantaged students and serve those students at rates comparable to surrounding public schools.

Strengths:

The applicant provided data that indicates that approximately 1,000 high school students are late graduates or school dropouts for Mobile’s schools. What’s more, the majority of high school failed to graduate college, and not career ready. The applicant stated that only 15 percent of high school graduates in the Mobile area perform proficiently on all four parts of the ACT national college entrance exam (Alabama State Department of Education, 2017). Furthermore, of the high schools located in the geographic region ACCEL serves, 42 percent (5 out of 12) of these high schools are considered “failing schools” by the Alabama State Department of Education. The applicant proposes to offer a school of choice for educationally disadvantaged students. The applicant indicated that it currently serves 240 students (first year) with 603 students applying for enrollment. The student population consist of 85% in poverty, 60 percent one or more below grade level, 19 percent receive special education services, 15 percent adjudicated, and 80 percent performing below the national average on the reading and math Scantron Performance Series assessment. The applicant provided enrollment and retention plan that specifically address the recruitment of educationally disadvantaged students (pgs. 20-21, e37, e38). The applicant provided success indicator results for first year in operation as follows: 86% of students on course for graduation after first semester, and forty-seven students on course for graduation this year (21 students completed two years of credit in one year) (p. 23, e40).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses indicated.

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
Sub Question

Strengths:
The applicant provided specific measurable goals, with indicators of success along with objectives and measurable outcomes (pgs. e24-31, e41-e48). For example, the achievement goals consist of 75% of students earning six or more high school credits annually; and 50% of students graduate on time (within 4 years of entering any high school). In addition, 80% of students graduate within 6 years of entering high school; 75% of students graduate college and career ready as measured by earning a college-level entry score on the ACT, earning college credit in high school, and/or earning an industry-based employment certification (p. 23, e40). Measurable goals provided for staffing and professional development (pgs. 33-34, e50-e51). The applicant indicated that it currently serves 240 students (first year) with 603 students applying for enrollment. The applicant provided a Logic Model on e131 in support of goals, objectives, and measurable outcomes.

Weaknesses:
No weaknesses indicated.

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 proposed curriculum is based on best practices best practices of field pioneers that include Big Picture, Expeditionary Learning, Summit Learning, Brooklyn Lab, Building 21, Intrinsic Schools, etc. The applicant stated that the proposed project is uniquely different and is designed to ensure that it provides an opportunity for at-risk youth to shift from a state of being disengaged, disconnected, and as dropped out to one of thriving (p. 10, e27). The applicant proposes to use a framework consisting of “rigor, relevance, and relationship. The applicant stated that Accel creates a learning environment that prepares students to “think, know, act, and go,” and provided a detailed description of each action and while ensuring the success of educationally disadvantage students (pgs. 15-16, e32, e33).

Weaknesses:
No weaknesses indicated.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. Note: 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: 16

Sub Question
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 provided a statement of the intent to encourage applications for employment from traditionally underrepresented population (p. e12). The applicant provided evidence of employing individuals from traditionally underrepresented groups. At least 50 percent of the school team consists of people of color with 75 percent black male representation (p. 33, e50).

   Weaknesses:
   No weaknesses indicated.

Reader's Score: 2

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

   Strengths:
   The applicant indicated in the narrative that it would be governed by a ten member volunteer Board of Directors; managed by a team of six administrative and support staff, and 15 full-time/part-time faculty. The applicant stated that Superintendent/Head of School would lead the day-to-day operations of the school, and other director level staffs include a Dean of School, Student Support Coordinator, District Accountability and Postsecondary Attainment, Director of External Engagement. Resumes were provided for Superintendent and Head of School, Dean of Students, Director of District Accountability and Postsecondary Attainment, and Lead Teacher for Competency-Based Instruction (pgs. 34-36, e51-e53, e129-e140).

   Weaknesses:
   The applicant failed to provide resumes indicating relevant training and experience for all key staff members, and Board of Directors. For example, the applicant provided only four resume (pgs. e53, e54, e61).

Reader's Score: 14

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 applicant provided a table that includes objectives, quarterly timeline, with responsibilities for the proposed project (p. 37-41, e54-59). The applicant provided a Logic Model with resources/inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes (measurable), and impact. The measurable outcomes includes 80 percent of students will earn 6 of more credits a semester 80 percent of students will benchmark on two or more parts of the ACT (p. e141). The applicant provided additional measurable goals, objectives and outcomes for the proposed project (pgs. e24-31, e41-e48). The applicant indicated a ten-member Board of Directors is responsible for oversight managing finances, establishing policies and programming, the school's performance, development, raising capital; and, providing input to, and review of, the Superintendent/Head of School (p. 34, e51).
Weaknesses:
The applicant failed to provide detailed financial plan for ensuring and safeguarding finances and assets, auditing oversight and processes by the establishment of internal control policy and procedures by the Board for the proposed project (pgs. 37-43, e54-e60).

The applicant failed to provide details/letters of commitment from partnership organizations, that provide support for dual credit and career readiness (e.g. Bishop State Community, employers, internship supporters, etc.) (p. e141).

The applicant failed to provide a detailed budget narrative and budget with local, state, and federal funding current and projected for the proposed project to ensure that the project would be completed within budget (pgs. e151-e153).

Reader's Score: 12

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, Mobile Area Education Foundation (MAEF), is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization that was founded in 1992, and has supported public schools, investing over $25 million in efforts to support public schools in the Mobile area. The applicant stated that it has been very successful in securing private funding for its launch efforts, has already exceeded its $600,000 annual goal for this current school year. Private funding has been secured through local, statewide, and national foundations. These funds place the applicant well on its way to their goal for $2 million in start-funds to reach sustainability. New School Ventures Fund is a current funder of the school with over half a million dollars invested. They expect to utilize these funds to help support the operations of the school, until year 4, when enrollment will allow for the school to be sustainable (p. 44, e61).

Weaknesses:
The applicant failed to provide a budget narrative or table providing the data sources and grant funding for proposed project.

The applicant failed to identify the sources of private funding.

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:

Strengths

The applicant indicated that it serves high school students in Mobile and the surrounding areas with a focus on three critical populations of students (1) those disengaged from the learning process and are seeking a more personalized and engaging learning environment, (2) overaged and under-credited, and (3) dropouts. The applicant indicated Accel Day and Evening Academy is focused on supporting at-risk youth of all backgrounds. Many of the students apply to the school with special education needs. During the first year in operation, it served 19% special education student population, 15 percent adjudicated, and 80 percent performing below the national average on the reading and math Scantron Performance Series assessment. The applicant anticipates increasing the enrollment of students with disabilities to 25 percent or more. The applicant stated that the academic curriculum is designed to provide differentiated and blended instruction to support students with disabilities, EL students and gifted students (p. 5, e22).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses indicated.

Reader's Score: 4

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:

Strengths

The applicant stated that it is the only public school in the area that utilizes a competency-based, student-centered, blended-learning model, which incorporates wraparound services and case management supports to ensure the success of students ensuring the attainment of goals of graduating college and being career ready (p. e16). The applicant indicated that Objective (3) for the proposed project consist of implementing a comprehensive postsecondary readiness approach that prepares off-track youth for dual-enrollment and advance placement coursework, successful benchmarking on the ACT, and workplace internships in high wage, high demand careers (p. 24, e41). The applicant presented strategies for successful impact, and to ensure post-secondary readiness include strategies for advanced placement, dual enrollment, benchmarking on the ACT, subsidized internships, and job shadowing programs. The applicant provides a table with activities for implementation of proposed strategy in phases (pgs. 28-30, e45-47). The applicant indicated students would be provided with opportunities to participate in industry approved apprenticeship programs through such organizations as the Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT) Center. The applicant provided a list of dual credit courses and technical coursework available for students that includes, English 101/102, History 101/102, Bio 101/102, Math 110/112/116, Psychology 200, Sociology 200, Speech 106, Art 100/Music 101, CIS 146:Microcomputer Applications Academic; and Welding, Medical/Nursing, Masonry, Plumbing, Automotive, HVAC, Electrician, Aviation Technology (Technical) (p. 13, e30).
Weaknesses:
No weaknesses indicated.

Reader's Score: 4

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 06/18/2018 05:55 PM
Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** MOBILE AREA EDUCATION FOUNDATION (U282B180059)  
**Reader #1:** ********

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**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Preference Priority 1**

Access to High Quality Educational Choice

| 1. Increasing Access                          | 4               | 4             |
| **Sub Total**                                 | 4               | 4             |

**Competitive Preference Priority 2**

Dual or Concurrent Enrollment Programs

| 1. Enrollment Programs                        | 4               | 4             |
| **Sub Total**                                 | 4               | 4             |

**Total**                                       | 108             | 87            |
Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - CSP Developers (84.282B) - 1: 84.282B

Reader #1: *******
Applicant: MOBILE AREA EDUCATION FOUNDATION (U282B180059)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Contribution in Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged

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 open will recruit and enroll educationally disadvantaged students and serve those students at rates comparable to surrounding public schools.

Strengths:

The instructional program is designed specifically for at risk students. Student achievement is the result of a focus on three R's: rigor, relevance, and relationships. (e25) In its recruitment efforts the school communicates that "students with special needs and limited English proficiency will be offered quality instruction." (e37)

The program is designed for at-risk students but the four parts of its instructional design will benefit students with special needs and limited English proficiency including Success Seminars are "designed to accelerate learning for students who are not able to read on an 8th grade level or master pre-algebra concepts." (e27). Backward design is used to create curriculum units and instructional activities that focus on precursor skills students need to be successful in high school courses (e27-e28)

The use a tiered instructional model to provide additional support to educationally disadvantaged students as needed. In Tier II students receive "more teacher check-ins, group tutoring, peer tutoring, or more time with advocate counselors." (e38) Tier III students receive the same support as Tier II plus "small group or one-to-one instruction with a resource aid to target specific skills." (e38)

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
Sub Question

Strengths:
The project consists of objectives in three areas: competency-based progression, project based learning, postsecondary readiness. The measures include goals for community support of the school, student achievement, and teacher professional development.

In the first area measures include the percentage of teacher, students and parents expressing positive views of the competency system; percentage of students mastering and passing courses each year, and percentage of students reaching benchmarks on the ACT.

The project-based learning measures include percentage of students proficient or advance on three or more projects, percentage of students reporting enjoyment of projects, and percentage of teachers increasing their capabilities to create projects.

For each objective quantifiable measures of success are included. The measures are relevant and logically measures of success for each of the objectives they are associated with. (e43-e44; e45; e47-48)

Postsecondary readiness measures include the percentage of students participating in job shadowing and internships, percentage of students reaching benchmarks on ACT, percentage of students reaching credit qualifying scores on AP exams, and percentage of students earning one or more dual enrollment credit.

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 application identifies the target population as "overaged, under credited students who have dropped out or who are at risk of dropping out." (e37)

The instructional program is built around rigor, relevance, and relationships: "the three R's of education" (e25)

The focus on rigor and relevance is presented through instruction that "prepares students to 'think, know, act and go." (e25) This is accomplished through a student-centered learning framework that develops student ownership of their learning, competency-based progression that keeps students actively engaged and appropriately challenged. Rigor and relevance are key components for at-risk students that address their academic needs by closing achievement gaps, and keeping students that have previously dropped out of school engaged through meaningful instruction and learning.

It is clear that the school has a clear understanding of its target population and was designed specifically to address the needs of that population.

Weaknesses:
No weaknesses identified.

Reader’s Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel
1. Note: 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: 14

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 school is partnering with DEI Accelerator to ensure a strategy is in place for a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace. (e49) The strategy will include "human capital recruitment and selection processes and fostering a culture that celebrates difference."(e50)

In addition to statements of commitment to creating a diverse workplace, the school identifies three goals: 50% of the school team are people of color, 80% of staff report that the school embraces equity, diversity, and inclusion, and 100% of staff participate in professional development focused on race, equity, diversity, and inclusion. (e50-e51)

Weaknesses:
No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 2

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

Strengths:
Resumes were provided for key project personnel. The experience and qualifications for the school leadership are appropriate and sufficient to implement the school model described in the application.
The project director has experience implementing a competency-based high school model and experience with a blended learning instructional model.(e52) Additionally, the school director has previously launched a high school in 2009.

The lead teacher and instructional designer has a Ph.D in instructional design and experience with project-based learning and blended learning.

Weaknesses:
Resumes were not provided for members of the Board of Directors to support the claim that they have "a depth and breadth of experience lending critical perspectives to the school including legal, financial, business management, communication, political, and community outreach."(e52-53)

Additionally, there is no demonstrated financial experience among the school leadership team. (e52-53)

Reader's Score: 12

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

Strengths:
A management plan is provided (e54-e59) that covers 4 years and includes information for each of the three objectives of the project. The plan is divided into quarters for each year. For each quarter a brief description of tasks to be completed during that timeframe is provided. Responsible parties are identified for each task.

Specific quarterly actions are provided for each of the three project objectives. Actions include revisions of processes based on feedback.

Weaknesses:
Tasks in the management plan are general and lack detail. For example, in Quarter 4 of Year 2, the task for Objective 1 states “Revision of system based upon feedback.” (e57) It is not clear how feedback is collected, whom it is collected from, nor how it will be analyzed to determine what revisions are appropriate and needed.

The management plan lacks sufficient detail to demonstrate how specific tasks will be monitored and reported. The management plan does not include budget information. Without this information included in the management plan it is unclear how the project will be monitored to ensure that expenses are appropriate and within budget.

The milestones provided are quarterly intervals. (e54-e59). Without more discrete increments of time it is unclear how the project will be managed to ensure that all tasks are completed on time.

Reader's Score: 12

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 application states that the school has exceed its goal of $600,000 for funding for the current school year and these funds are from local, statewide, and national foundations. (e61)

The school anticipates that it will be able to operate solely on state and federal funding by the fourth year of the project. (e60)

New Schools Venture Fund has invested over half a million dollars into the school that will support the school through year 4.

Weaknesses:
The application states that the school received far less in local funds than expected, and indicates that the shortage was $190,000. Despite this unexplained shortage the applicant states that over time “the portion of local funds should increase because students will already be enrolled in the school.” This explanation is not clear and does not explain the $190,000 shortage in the first year of operation. Without more explanation regarding this unexpected shortage the claims that the school will be able to be sustained solely on state and federal funding are unfounded.

Reader's Score: 8
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 school intends to encourage students with disabilities to apply to the school, resulting in an increase in that population from 19% to a goal of 25%. (e22) Several aspects of the school's design result in individualized and differentiated instruction to meet the needs of students. These include blending learning that allows students to move at their own pace, Response to Intervention and Student Success Teams to provide monitoring of student performance and assistance to students as needed. Additionally, phase teams have weekly meeting to discuss individual students. (e23)

Transportation is provided to students. (e37) Students eligible for free/reduced lunch are provided discounted or free bus passes. Additional transportation will be provided through a contract with a bus company. Providing transportation for students removes a barrier for students and increases their access to the school.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 4

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:

Dual enrollment is embedded into the instructional program of the school. Students are required to "take at least one postsecondary dual enrollment course from Bishop State Community College."(e24) This is a minimum expectation, but students are able to "earn up to 18 credit hours" prior to graduation. (e24)

The structure of this dual enrollment program not only increases access for students by requiring all students to participate, but provides students with the experience of attending courses on a college campus. The program is differentiated for students. Those with a GPA lower than 3.0 take courses onsite at the school, while students with a GPA of 3.0 or higher are able to attend their courses at Bishop State Community College. (e23)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.
### Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** MOBILE AREA EDUCATION FOUNDATION (U282B180059)  
**Reader #3:** ********

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**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Preference Priority 1**

Access to High Quality Educational Choice

1. Increasing Access                           | 4               | 4             |

**Sub Total**                                  | 4               | 4             |

**Competitive Preference Priority 2**

Dual or Concurrent Enrollment Programs

1. Enrollment Programs                        | 4               | 4             |

**Sub Total**                                  | 4               | 4             |

**Total**                                      | 108             | 89            |
Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - CSP Developers (84.282B) - 1: 84.282B

Reader #3: *******
Applicant: MOBILE AREA EDUCATION FOUNDATION (U282B180059)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Contribution in Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged

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 open will recruit and enroll educationally disadvantaged students and serve those students at rates comparable to surrounding public schools.

Strengths:

One thousand high school students are not on track to graduate or have already dropped out of Mobile area schools. The school currently serves 240 students and had 603 applicants, 85% are in poverty, 60% one or more grade levels behind, 19% special education, 15% adjudicated, and 80% below grade level on nationally normed tests of reading and Math (Scantron). These percentages are higher than surrounding Mobile area schools (page e21). There are plans to increase special education percentage to 25% (page e22). There is a rigorous college preparatory program with robust supports such as RTI and SSTs (page e22-23). Five of the twelve surrounding high schools are considered failing schools by the Alabama Department of Education (page e21). The school is focused on the dropout population which is clearly a high needs population.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

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:

There are three objectives listed: competency-based progression, project-based learning, and postsecondary readiness (pages e41-48). There are indicators of success for each objective, many of which are numerical and measurable (for example 80% of students passing college courses each year, 7% earning proficient or advanced on authentic assessment projects, and 75 of preparation phase students participating in unsubsidized internships. See pages e41-48)
Sub Question

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:
There are very clear linkages between project activities and the stated objectives and outcomes of the grant application. Those activities are targeted to the population of students the school is serving and are based on research into how best to serve the needs of that population.

Weaknesses:
No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. Note: 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: 16

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:
Greater than 75% of current staff are people of color (page e50). There is a recruitment intention, professional development plan and organizational plan outlined on page e50 of the application, with two goals that have already been met. The organization is led by a black male (page e50).

Weaknesses:
No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

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

Strengths:
A diverse ten-member board of directors has broad subject matter knowledge and experience in operating schools and providing services to the student population of Mobile (p e51). The project director is a Harvard Fellow with extensive charter school experience. The implementation team has an impressive set of resumes (pages e52-53).
Sub Question

Weaknesses:
Resumes were not provided for members of the board of directors that support the wide range of skills noted in the narrative (pages e52-53). There is no documented financial experience in the school’s leadership team.

Reader’s Score: 14

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:
A listing of key activities by the quarter of the grant period is organized by objective (see pages e56-59). It includes individuals responsible for each task by name. The fact that the tasks are broken down by quarters is exceptionally strong.

Weaknesses:
The management plan does not include budgetary or other resources being used, does not include a plan for reporting on progress to the board and other stakeholders, and does not include information about details for each task (pages e56-59). The applicant failed to provide a detailed budget narrative to indicate how the budget was developed (pages e151-e153) and how calculations were completed. Two people, each 50% time were included but no explanation of the logic for that or other budget components. There is no letter of commitment from the community college.

Reader's Score: 10

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 grantee says they will operate only on state and federal funding beginning in year 4 of the grant (page e60). Private funds were raised in excess of $600,000 in the inaugural year of the school (page e61). There is a $2 million start-up fund goal, and New Ventures Fund is one of the funders. The Mobile Area Education Foundation (page e20) has raised more than 25 million dollars in the last 25 years to support local schools and is the proposed grantee.

Weaknesses:
The $190,000 shortfall between $240,000 and the $50,000 noted on page e61 is never fully explained, nor is it clear the school has a plan to overcome that shortfall if it continues into the future. The budget narrative on pages e151-153 lacks specificity about how the enrollment projections tie into the assertion on page e60 that the school will rely only on state and federal funding beginning in year 4 of the grant.

Reader's Score: 10

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:
Approximately 1000 high school students are not on track to graduate or have already dropped out of Mobile area schools. The school currently serves 240 students and had 603 applicants. There are 85% in poverty, 60% are one or more grade levels behind, 19% special education, 15% adjudicated, and 80% below grade level on nationally normed tests of reading and Math (Scantron). These percentages are higher than surrounding Mobile area schools (page e21). There are plans to increase special education percentage to 25% (page e22). There is a rigorous college preparatory program with robust supports such as RTI and SSTs (page e22-23).

Weaknesses:
No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

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:
All students take at least one postsecondary course from Bishop State Community College. Some with lower grade point averages take a College Success Course, English 101, and Western Civilization. More advanced students take up to 9 hours for the fall and spring semesters of their senior year, allowing them to complete up to 18 units of community college credit prior to graduation. (page e24)

Weaknesses:
No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 06/16/2018 03:02 PM