

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/17/2018 05:30 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: National Association of Charter School Authorizers (U282T180004)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance of the proposed project		
1. Significance	35	35
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	27
Quality of Management Plan/adequacy of resources		
1. Management Plan/Resources	15	13
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	8
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	10	10
Sub Total	100	93
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process		
1. Building Capacity	5	4
Sub Total	5	4
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
Empowering Families and Individuals		
1. Families and Individuals	5	0
Sub Total	5	0
Total	110	97

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - CSP National Dissemination - 1: 84.282T

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: National Association of Charter School Authorizers (U282T180004)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance of the proposed project

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 35 points):

(1) The potential for generalizing from the findings or results of the proposed project;

(2) The extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies;

(3) The likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement; and

(4) The extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population.

Strengths:

Through the updating of the Principles and Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing, the applicant will provide guiding principles that can be utilized in any authorizing situation. Information will be gathered that will provide the applicant with needed revisions to the Principles which will be disseminated through their networks, thereby making it available to hundreds of authorizers. This process allows information to be generalized and shared among authorizers. (Pg. e22 – e23)

A well-thought-out, established dissemination plan takes into account the different ways in which individuals learn, as well as the amount of time they have available for learning, to provide a varied plan that is currently being used by authorizers and will continue to be used by authorizers throughout the nation. (Pg. e24 – e25)

By researching and developing authorizing practices that will assist authorizers in becoming more efficient in their practices, with the ability to produce positive change for students, this project has potential to produce significant system change. With authorizers working directly with their charter schools for compliance and academic progress, there are opportunities in which the authorizers can identify weaknesses in specific charters and provide them with solid practices in which to make these changes. (Pg. e25)

The applicant is very aware of the many differing types of authorizers in the country, and the aspects of each authorizer that makes them unique. Each of these different qualities define what type of assistance is needed, whether it is a new or seasoned operator, a single state authorizer or one of many within the state. (Pg. e21) Because NACSA is aware of these differences, they have created aligned and targeted assistance throughout this project. This will ensure that local capacity will be developed to address the needs of specific populations. (Pg. e26)

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 35

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 (up to 30 points):

(1) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c));

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

(3) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition; and

(4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.

Strengths:

The applicant is the recognized primary expert on charter school authorizing practices in the nation. Through its existing membership network, they have contact with more than 1000 authorizers. The rationale as presented will be informed by research and will produce an updated set of authorizing principles to be disseminated by the applicant and its partners. (Pg. e 27 – e29)

Goals and objectives are clearly outlined with each goal including measurements, activities outputs and outcomes which are aligned to the Logic Model. The Logic Model includes specific details of the project, including activities and possible outcomes as related to the activities. (Pg. e30 – e31)

The project is exceptional in that the applicant is the leading support agency for charter school authorizers in the nation, and they have developed the “Principles and Standards” that charter authorizers have used since 2004. (Pg. e23 – e24) This document is the most utilized resource on the applicant’s webpage. This research project will further study specific authoring needs – small authorizers, new authorizers, schools in need of closure, and will include these findings into the Principles and Standards, making that document more relevant in our current market. (Pg. e51 – 52)

The project will produce deliverables based on tried and proven methods for authorizing charter schools, taking into account the authorizers needs. These modifications to the Principles and Standards documents as revised through the research will be disseminated by the applicant and three national partners. Through these networks the applicant will have access to many authorizers and charter support organizations. (Pg. e53)

Weaknesses:

The applicant indicates in the narrative that they are reaching the neediest charter authorizers – those with 5 years or less of operation and those with 5 or less charter schools. However, the outcome measures associated with each objective state that NACSA will disseminate resource to 90% of authorizer with five or more schools. This statement contradicts the information provided in the Competitive Preference Priority. Within the objectives, there is not language relative to the priorities within this grant project and as stated on pg. e10 of the application.

Reader's Score: 27

Selection Criteria - Quality of Management Plan/adequacy of resources

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 15 points):

(1) 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;

(2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project; and

(3) The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project.

Strengths:

Roles and responsibilities are well defined for all aspects of the project. A timeline is provided indicating activities that will occur during each quarter with the research always preceding the development of resources. Milestones are defined through the plan and aligned to the scope of the project. (Pg. e51 – e52 and e166 – e167)

The organization is well staffed with individuals who are extremely capable of handling a project of this magnitude. The costs are outlined as total cost per objective, and also as areas of costs in the budget narrative. The costs are heavily focused on personnel and activities related to the dissemination of findings, as well as new tools that are developed as a result of this project. These costs are reasonable given the scope of the work and the potential significance of the outcomes. (Pg. e57 – e58 and e170 – e181)

Each partner has been chosen for their usefulness within the scope of the project, whether that be dissemination assistance or collaboration on best practices. All of these organizations have supplied a letter of support, confirming their commitment to role in the project. (Pg. e59 – e60 and e111 – e114)

Weaknesses:

The applicant includes an organization called Chiefs for Change within this project. The roles and responsibilities of this organization are not clearly defined.

Reader's Score: 13

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 the following factors (up to 10 points):

(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;

(2) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator; and

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

Strengths:

According to the narrative, NACSA recruits a diverse pool of applicants when there are openings within the organization. A definition is given for the organizations view on what characteristics are considered as diverse. The applicant has participated in a diversity, equity and inclusion accelerator program to help assist with recognizing and supporting the practice within the organization. (Pg. e60 – e61)

The project director is well qualified to work with this project. She has had extensive work within the scope of improving authorizer practices through her participation in a federal contract for the past five years as part of her tasks at NACSA. (Pg. e61)She is well educated in areas that are help to the work within the charter sector. (Pg. e94 – 95)

The project personnel are well qualified with many valuable experiences within NACSA and the broader charter sector. Information is also provided on personnel from each partner working with this project. All individuals bring extensive experience in areas that will support this project. (Pg. e63 – e68)

Weaknesses:

There is no discussion as to how the applicant actually encourages people of underrepresented groups to apply for employment within the organization.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible (up to 10 points).**

Strengths:

The project evaluation processes are outlined, are in alignment with the stated goals and objectives, and include methods in which to gather information and to perform data analysis. NACSA staff and partners will be the main gatherers of data with the external evaluator analyzing the data and keeping the evaluation on track. The evaluation will focus on measuring the attainment of goals and objectives as outlined throughout the evaluation with the use of both quantitative and qualitative data. (Pg. e69 – 79) This is very thorough and well done.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process

- 1. Competitive Preference Priority 1--Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process for Educational Agencies with the Most Need (Up to 5 points, only available to applicants meeting Absolute Priority 1)**

Projects that propose to target one or more of the following: States that have enacted laws in the last five years allowing charter schools to open; authorized public chartering agencies (as defined in the NIA) with fewer than ten charter schools; and authorized public chartering agencies that authorize a significant number of charter schools experiencing significant low performance or non-compliance with academic, financial, governance, or operational (including school safety) requirements.

Strengths:

The applicant will engage authorizers in states with charter laws that were enacted no more than 5 years ago and will also focus on authorizers with 10 or fewer charter schools. This is the major focus of the application, and activities are outlined to specifically meet this goal. (Pg. e20)

Weaknesses:

The applicant identifies the states with new charter laws, but did not include the year those charter laws were enacted in each specific state. Without this information it is difficult to validate alignment between the target audience and the grant criterion.

Reader's Score: 4

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Empowering Families and Individuals

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2--Empowering Families and Individuals To Choose a High-Quality Education That Meets Their Unique Needs (Up to 5 points)

Projects that are designed to address increasing access to educational choice for one or more of the following groups of children or students:

- (i) Children or students with disabilities.
- (ii) English learners.
- (iii) Students who are Indians, as defined in section 6151 of the ESEA.
- (iv) Children or students in communities served by rural local educational agencies.

Strengths:

The applicant did not address this criterion.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address this criterion.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/17/2018 05:30 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/18/2018 08:17 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: National Association of Charter School Authorizers (U282T180004)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance of the proposed project		
1. Significance	35	32
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	24
Quality of Management Plan/adequacy of resources		
1. Management Plan/Resources	15	14
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	9
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	10	10
Sub Total	100	89
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process		
1. Building Capacity	5	3
Sub Total	5	3
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
Empowering Families and Individuals		
1. Families and Individuals	5	0
Sub Total	5	0
Total	110	92

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - CSP National Dissemination - 1: 84.282T

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: National Association of Charter School Authorizers (U282T180004)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance of the proposed project

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 35 points):

(1) The potential for generalizing from the findings or results of the proposed project;

(2) The extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies;

(3) The likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement; and

(4) The extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population.

Strengths:

NACSA demonstrates strong significance of the proposed SCAN Project (e21-28). There is strong evidence of the potential to generalize from the findings and the dissemination plan clearly documents how others will be able to use the information provided. NACSA aligned SCAN Project to each of the competition's key components: compliance, replication/ expansion of high quality schools; closing under-performing schools; and building capacity of authorizers in most need. SCAN Project proposes to be the "single largest effort to develop and nationally disseminate authorizing best practices" by producing more than 40 deliverables that will be disseminated through 30 different activities and accessible to every authorizer in the country (e21). NACSA identifies that it has the capacity and experience to conduct the research, tool development and dissemination required to generalize findings in two ways. First, NACSA created the "Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing" (Principles and Standards) in 2004. This tool (and its various updates) has become the 'industry standard' for quality authorizing across the country. In addition, in the last year, NACSA has provided resources and supports to 125 authorizers in 38 states (e22).

This project is specifically significant and generalizable because the intent is to dig deeper into research and practice to increase the knowledge and understanding of the direct connections between good authorizing and school quality (e29-30) which will, in turn, lead to modifications of NACSA Principles and Standards. The revised Principles and Standards will then be generalized by creating a wide variety of tools and resources that are customizable by any authorizer and disseminated widely through activities including NACSA conferences, NACSA Leaders programs, peer-to-peer learning, online tools and other resources (e23). The dissemination plan includes multiple modalities aligned to different learner and stakeholder needs (e24), and will include in-person (trainings, conferences, etc.), virtual (webinars, teleconferences) and online content (LMS courses, digital downloads, video) which will enable access to any authorizer or charter stakeholder in the nation.

The applicant provides a well-defined plan for system change. The plan is well-defined in that it proposes to: target problem; generate new knowledge and create/disseminate tools and resources based on this knowledge; authorizers with the capacity to impact system change implement resources building local capacity to improve systems and outcomes (e25).

Weaknesses:

The application does not meet the criteria for outstanding without weakness because the narrative lacks key data points regarding the impact on system change and local capacity building in the dissemination of the 2004 Principles and Standards, the 2012 Essential Practice tools and the proposed SCAN Project. For example, the applicant states its work led to the strengthening of oversight in 5,182 schools in the last year, but the proposal lacks evidence demonstrating this impact (e22). The applicant anticipates the SCAN Project's significance will be similar to the 2012 release of NACSA 12 Essential Practices. NACSA reports that in 2012 only 23% of authorizers surveyed were using these practices but by 2017 this increased to 78% of authorizers surveyed. NACSA did not qualify this data point with information such as sample size, number of essential practices implemented or fidelity of implementation. Therefore, the true significance of this data point is not clearly measurable. While the applicant identifies a strong plan for system change as a result of the SCAN Project, the plan has the potential to indirectly – not directly – impact system change and capacity building. Without strong documentation regarding implementation with fidelity by participating authorizers participating, and a significant system for assessing the strength of fidelity of implementation, the project may be unable to clearly demonstrate system change and local capacity building.

Reader's Score: 32

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 (up to 30 points):**
 - (1) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c));**
 - (2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable;**
 - (3) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition; and**
 - (4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.**

Strengths:

The application describes a sound rationale that includes both a logic model and description of the project's theory of action. The theory of action: by increasing understanding of the link between good authorizing and school quality, NACSA will create and disseminate tools, resources and trainings to authorizers. As a result of these tools, authorizers will improve oversight and monitoring practices. Schools will then improve or close, and students will attend high quality schools where they experience improved achievement and are more likely to be successful beyond school (e29-30).

The proposal is a strong approach to this competition's priorities because SCAN Project proposes to target dissemination of resources more than 40 resources to over 1000 authorizers and will measure the results by collecting and reporting data on the percent of authorizers that access the tools and their 'satisfaction' with the tools. The proposal defines very specific pathways for achieving each of the four identified objectives and each objective is clearly aligned to a significant need in the field. For example, Objective 2 is focused on capacity building for authorizers in most need and project outputs are directly linked to the needs of small authorizers with fewer than 10 schools as well as large authorizers with small staffs who lack capacity to directly impact their portfolio.

The proposal identifies objectives and outlines outputs (e31-50) and outcome measures (e70-78) associated with each objective. The objectives, outputs and outcome measures are separated based on whether they are for resource development or dissemination which increases clarity of project design and demonstrates a strong plan for broad dissemination of the project deliverables. Further, by separating dissemination information, the applicant is able to clearly delineate the type of resource and NACSA's plans for disseminating that resource to its intended audience.

Weaknesses:

The proposal has a strong project design but is not an exceptional approach to this competition's priorities because the logic model is missing key requirements, project goals and identified outcomes lack specificity and measurability with the overall SCAN Project focused on access not impact. The Federal Register (26044) requires the logic model to include inputs and resources, project activities, project outputs and outcomes. The graphic identified as the logic model (e30) is a good representation of the project but does not include required logic model components.

Objectives, outputs and outcomes are somewhat, but not sufficiently specific and measurable, and do not clearly align with Federal Register requirements (26044). For example, objective 1 (develop, identify, expand and disseminate best practices in monitoring compliance) is specific but not measurable. Output measure 1 for resource development (Objective 1) is an activity, not an output. It describes what NACSA will do, as opposed to what will happen as a result of that activity (e70-71). Outcome Measure 1 (Objective 1) is a clear and measurable output, not an outcome measure, otherwise known as project deliverable (increased awareness of resources). An outcome should typically focus on the impact of using the resources.

Finally, the project is not an exceptional approach to this competition because the overall approach is focused on access – not impact. For example, SCAN Project proposes to target dissemination of more than 40 resources to over 1000 authorizers and will measure the results by collecting and reporting data on the percent of authorizers that access the tools and their 'satisfaction' with the tools. While this is important work it is not an exceptional approach because it the project lacks outcomes that clearly measure the extent to which use of SCAN Project tools, trainings and resources results in system change or capacity building, so it can be directly connected to goal 1 (strengthens authorizing and oversight).

Reader's Score: **24**

Selection Criteria - Quality of Management Plan/adequacy of resources

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 15 points):

(1) 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;

(2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project; and

(3) The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project.

Strengths:

The applicant's management plan and adequacy of resources is excellent. The applicant provides specific details regarding how the project will be managed and work will be embedded within the overall context of the organization, minimizing costs and maximizing efficiency. For example, NACSA has identified a talented and experienced project leadership team responsible to manage all aspects of the project (e60-68). Individual staff and consultants will report to the leadership team and leadership team members will be directly held responsible for accomplishing activities and milestones (e35-38). A comprehensive timeline (e166-167) is provided that is clearly linked to project objectives, identifies project leadership team members responsible for oversight and identifies a specific start and end time guiding implementation. This degree of specificity demonstrates that there is not overlap between development, implementation and dissemination activities that could result in project timelines or budget challenges during the project. NACSA identifies three systems (project management, knowledge management and performance management) that will be used to document and track project progress. These tools will be extremely valuable for ensuring project success.

Overall, the budget (e70-81) is reasonable in relation to the objectives, design and potential significance. One key feature

that demonstrates strength is the annual breakdown that clearly defines responsibilities and associated percentage of time on the project in both narrative form and budget form. In addition, the project will contract each year for an independent audit to ensure federal funds are being expended in alignment with federal law and NACSA board policy. Finally, contractor costs appear reasonable and necessary given their scope of work.

The project identifies three partners (NASBE, Chiefs for Change, Charter School Growth Fund) that are relevant to the project and will improve outreach and dissemination quality (e59-60). Each partner provided a letter (e112-114) that clearly documents not just its support, but its commitment to the project.

Weaknesses:

The project has a few key weaknesses that prohibit it from being considered outstanding, without weakness There are also a few budget concerns. First, in each year NACSA requests significant funds for project travel but does not provide enough detail to document how those funds will be spent. Information such as the number of trips, how many staff and cost per person per trip should be included. This is also the case with the "other" category for years one and three, additional detail is needed to define how funds will be spent. Second, the project is not requested any supply funds for the project and does not denote that supplies will be covered by NACSA as an in-kind. This is problematic because NACSA plans face to face trainings, convenings and conference presentations. While digital materials can and should be used to keep supply costs to a minimum, it would be expected that some costs such as printing and other materials will be required. Finally, the Y2 leader cohort has one cohort that is more expensive than the others and lacks a rationale for the cost differential (e176).

Reader's Score: 14

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 the following factors (up to 10 points):**
 - (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;**
 - (2) **The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator; and**
 - (3) **The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.**

Strengths:

NACSA identifies the organization's Senior Director of Authorizer Engagement & Advancement as the Project Director (PD) and includes a resume (e94-95) fully describes the qualifications, relevant training and experience that makes this person highly qualified for the PD role on this project. The PD currently manages a \$2M federal subcontract which requires her to engage both with US Department of Education staff and collaborate with staff and consultants working directly on the project. The PD also has a background in law with experience working on policies related to closing the achievement gaps for low income and minority students (e61).

The applicant also identifies seven additional NACSA staff members as key personnel, 2 staff from the external evaluator and one person from each of the three project partners. The application provides resumes or vitae (e83-109) for each person and also clearly describes the roles and responsibilities (e35-38), qualifications, training and experience for each of the identified key personnel (e63-69).

Weaknesses:

The applicant's response to sub-criterion 1 (encourage applications from underrepresented persons) does not fully meet the requirement. The application states "NACSA encourages individuals of all ethnic, racial, socioeconomic and other diverse backgrounds to apply for open positions" and follows with an explanation of the organization's efforts to promote diversity. These statements do not describe the "how" or the process used by the applicant to "encourage applications".

Reader's Score: 9

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible (up to 10 points).**

Strengths:

The applicant has identified Basis Policy Research (Basis) as the external evaluator and provides resumes (e101-102), an organizational bio and individual bios (e67-69) for the two key personnel assigned to the project. Basis is an independent research firm that "conducts applied research, data analytics and program evaluation for PK-20 educational organizations across the US (e67). Basis has experience conducting evaluations for organizations including the Michigan Department of Education, Missouri Charter Public School Commission and Thomas B. Fordham Institute. Basis identifies two key project personnel including a Senior Researcher and Associate. The Senior Researcher's skill set includes substantial charter school experience and research related to "the impact of macro-level policies... on student level educational opportunities and outcomes" (e68). The information provided demonstrate the evaluator is highly capable of conducting a rigorous evaluation for this project.

The identified evaluation plan is aligned with the project's objectives and NACSA's long term commitment to implement research-based approach to improving youth outcomes through quality authorizing (e67). The evaluation plan was designed to identify and report on the extent to which the SCAN Project meets program goals, objectives and outcomes throughout the life of the grant. The proposal includes its identified performance measures and targets. The applicant states that all work is new and therefore baseline data is not currently available. Baseline data will be collected throughout the project as tools are created and disseminated. As baseline data is collected and reported, it will be used beyond the scope of this project to student the impact of SCAN Project actions in strengthening charter school authorizing and oversight (e67). Evaluation methods, including data collection and analysis processes, are also included within the evaluation plan (e78-79).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions**Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process**

- 1. Competitive Preference Priority 1--Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process for Educational Agencies with the Most Need (Up to 5 points, only available to applicants meeting Absolute Priority 1)**

Projects that propose to target one or more of the following: States that have enacted laws in the last five years allowing charter schools to open; authorized public chartering agencies (as defined in the NIA) with fewer than ten charter schools; and authorized public chartering agencies that authorize a significant number of charter schools experiencing significant low performance or non-compliance with academic, financial,

governance, or operational (including school safety) requirements.

Strengths:

Applicant states that it will support four states (Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Washington) that have passed charter laws within the last five years (e20, 28). The applicant states it will support 890 authorizers that support fewer than 10 schools (e20, 28).

Weaknesses:

Applicant does not provide information detailing when each of the four states passed charter laws as evidence that each state meets the criteria for charter laws enacted in the last five years. Applicant does not provide detailed description of the authorizers (890) that will be served and evidence demonstrating these authorizers support fewer than 10 schools.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Empowering Families and Individuals

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2--Empowering Families and Individuals To Choose a High-Quality Education That Meets Their Unique Needs (Up to 5 points)

Projects that are designed to address increasing access to educational choice for one or more of the following groups of children or students:

- (i) Children or students with disabilities.**
- (ii) English learners.**
- (iii) Students who are Indians, as defined in section 6151 of the ESEA.**
- (iv) Children or students in communities served by rural local educational agencies.**

Strengths:

No response provided.

Weaknesses:

No response provided.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/18/2018 08:17 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/17/2018 05:51 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: National Association of Charter School Authorizers (U282T180004)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance of the proposed project		
1. Significance	35	35
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	30
Quality of Management Plan/adequacy of resources		
1. Management Plan/Resources	15	15
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	7
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	10	10
Sub Total	100	97
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process		
1. Building Capacity	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
Empowering Families and Individuals		
1. Families and Individuals	5	0
Sub Total	5	0
Total	110	102

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - CSP National Dissemination - 1: 84.282T

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: National Association of Charter School Authorizers (U282T180004)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance of the proposed project

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 35 points):

(1) The potential for generalizing from the findings or results of the proposed project;

(2) The extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies;

(3) The likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement; and

(4) The extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population.

Strengths:

The applicant has ably demonstrated its capacity and the potential for generalizing from the findings, results and materials of the proposed project. This is, in part, demonstrated through the NACSA long-standing Principals and Practices (2004) document which still is the most frequently accessed resource (e23).

Additional generalizability of NACSA's work is demonstrated by "125 authorizing agencies in 38 states downloading" templates, resource guides, webinars, conference sessions, and accessing other membership services in one year alone (e22).

NACSA's unique capacity and national presence is demonstrable evidence of the extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable others to use the information and strategies. This is, in part, evidenced by the three types of dissemination strategies, In-person learning, virtual learning and digital learning (e24). Additionally, even with a paid membership, the applicant currently serves "154 authorizers representing 5,137 charter schools-nearly 75% of all charter schools" (e24) is testament to its capacity to share useful and timely information on a national level.

There is a very strong likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement. This is, in part, due to the fact that NACSA understands the very different state, local and human capacity contexts for each of its constituents. The applicant provides exemplary strategies and dissemination practices for "helping "authorizers translate national best practice into local practice" (e22). Additionally, it has a proven track record of influencing system change. This is demonstrated with the 12 Essential Practices (2012), which initially were implemented by 23 percent of the surveyed authorizers. "By 2017 That rate had more than tripled to 78% "(e25).

The applicant's long-standing presence (since 2000, e20) as a quality resource to all types of authorizers demonstrates the extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the authorizers with significant need and those with fewer than 10 schools. NACSA's mission to "increase and improve quality educational opportunities for children by strengthening charter school authorizing" is in direct alignment with this grant's priorities (e 26).

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 35

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 (up to 30 points):

(1) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c));

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

(3) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition; and

(4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.

Strengths:

The applicant comprehensively demonstrated need and rationale for the project – and aligned needs specifically to the project objectives (e31-50). As well, rationale was provided for each objective.

Overall, the project rationale is demonstrated as follows.

- The current high volume of implementation of the 12 essential Practices and access to NACSA's tools and resources
- CREDO (2013) research that found "that quality authorizing is a critical component of the ecosystem of laws and practices that lead to quality charter schools" (e29)
- "The biggest single driver of improved functioning of the charter school sector....was closure of persistently failing schools" (e29)

As an example of how the applicant carried this rationale forward to a specific objective is seen in Objective 4 rational which states, "Accountability is one of the pillars of charter school philosophy. The ultimate manifestation of accountability is the closure of persistently underperforming schools. Without the possibility of closure, there is no accountability and without accountability, there are no true charter schools"(e46). The applicant then provides specific activities and outputs designed around informing school closure. The logic model (e30) aligns the "key components" of the project and demonstrates impact.

The applicant has provided a clear and complete articulation of the project goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project. Each objective has outcome measures, rationale, activities, outputs and a dissemination plan specific to that objective. The outcome measures are specific, timebound, targeted – and measurable (e31-50).

The applicant's targeted dissemination mechanisms are an exceptional approach to the priorities. They are exceptional in that they truly respond to need as demonstrated in Objective 2 where a critical need of the identified target audience requires immediate access to information. The applicant thus provides digital learning which allows its target authorizer audience to "seek out targeted information for their specific challenge and access it immediately" (e40).

Additionally, the applicant proposal represents an exceptional approach to the priorities because it provides exemplar authorizing practice information to ALL types of authorizing entities, of any size, nationwide.

The applicant has demonstrated exemplary mechanisms that it will use to broadly disseminate on a national level information on its SCAN project so as to support further development and replication. This is, in part, evidenced as follows.

- More than 30 dissemination activities (e21)

- Each project objective has its own comprehensive dissemination plan
- “The information and materials are national in scope and tailored to the relevant audiences” (e53)
- Dissemination goes to “to all types of authorizes of all sizes” (e53)
- The results, findings and materials will be permanently housed at NACSA (e53)

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 30

Selection Criteria - Quality of Management Plan/adequacy of resources

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors (up to 15 points):

- (1) 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;**
- (2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project; and**
- (3) The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project.**

Strengths:

The applicant has provided a clear, comprehensive and complete management plan (e 166-167). The management plan has clearly defined staff responsibilities, timeline, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. The timeline also links activities “to outputs and outcomes in the evaluation plan” (e57).

There is a strong likelihood that the applicant will achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget.

The applicant has provided a detailed, clear and comprehensive budget that aligns to the project goals, objectives and the proposed staff. Specifically, the budget is allocated by objectives (e57). Given its national presence and access to all authorizers, the proposed costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the production of “more than 40 deliverables disseminated through more than 30 channels” (e17).

The applicant has demonstrated the relevance and commitment of each of its partners in the implementation and success of the project in the narrative (e59-60) and through numerous letters of support (e111-128). Demonstrating its broad reach, and strong relationship with its partners, these letters came from charter authorizers, the National Association of State Boards of Education, charter school support organizations, SEAs, SBEs, CMO’s, universities, and others.

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses.

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 the following factors (up to 10 points):

(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;

(2) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator; and

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

Strengths:

In response to how it 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, the applicant notes that it participates in the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Accelerator cohort established by Promise54 (e61). "The Accelerator is a multi-month program that provides learning, coaching, and action planning (e61), as such, it provides an ongoing support of "people-related opportunities and challenges through the lens of diversity, equity and inclusion" (e61).

Per the narrative (e61) and resume (e94-95), the proposed project director brings a wealth of charter authoring and oversight experience, expertise and knowledge. She currently manages the "\$2million subcontract to strengthen authorizer quality and practice across the United States" (e61). Additionally, she brings qualifications as a Juris Doctor.

Per the narrative, (e63-68) and the resumes (e e83-108) each of the key project personnel bring deep charter sector, education, non-profit, and content specific (i.e. finance, law, policy, etc.) experience, expertise knowledge and skill. This includes relevant training. Overall, the diversity of experience brought by all the project personnel is a benefit to the breadth of stakeholders that NACSA serves. The ability to differentiate will allow NACSA to provide individual technical assistance to its constituencies.

NACSA as an organization developed the Principles and Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing, "which since its release in 2004 has become the industry touchstone for best practices (e62).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses:

While the applicant notes that it "encourages individuals of all ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, and other diverse backgrounds to apply for open positions" (e60), it did not specifically address or demonstrate how it 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.

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible (up to 10 points).

Strengths:

The applicant has identified an external evaluator with experience in evaluating education grant projects. The proposed evaluation plan is comprehensive, uses performance measures that are aligned to the project outcomes, and responds to all the application evaluation requirements. Detailed components include:

- Baseline information (zero for new tasks and products, e69);
- Objectives and specific, targeted and timebound output measures (e70-78);

- Data collection via document review, online “hits” (i.e. email clicks, webpage views, website stay time, etc.), in person learning surveys and interviews (e78);
- Data analysis will be mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) utilizing a variety of data collection and analysis measures specific to each outcome measure (e79).

Overall , the applicant has a strong evaluation plan that will “determine and report on the extent to which goals, objectives and outcomes are met during the three years of the grant” (e69).

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1--Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process for Educational Agencies with the Most Need (Up to 5 points, only available to applicants meeting Absolute Priority 1)

Projects that propose to target one or more of the following: States that have enacted laws in the last five years allowing charter schools to open; authorized public chartering agencies (as defined in the NIA) with fewer than ten charter schools; and authorized public chartering agencies that authorize a significant number of charter schools experiencing significant low performance or non-compliance with academic, financial, governance, or operational (including school safety) requirements.

Strengths:

The applicant proposes to target the following: States that have enacted laws in the last five years allowing charter schools to open; authorized public chartering agencies (as defined in the NIA) with fewer than ten charter schools (e20).

The applicant has comprehensively and articulately demonstrated how it will meet this CCP through the following four initiatives:

- Promoting and monitoring the compliance of charter schools
- Facilitating replication and expansion of high quality charter schools
- Closing persistently underperforming schools
- Building capacity of authorizers with the most need (e20)

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Empowering Families and Individuals

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2--Empowering Families and Individuals To Choose a High-Quality Education That Meets Their Unique Needs (Up to 5 points)

Projects that are designed to address increasing access to educational choice for one or more of the following groups of children or students:

- (i) Children or students with disabilities.**

- (ii) English learners.
- (iii) Students who are Indians, as defined in section 6151 of the ESEA.
- (iv) Children or students in communities served by rural local educational agencies.

Strengths:

This CPP was not addressed.

Weaknesses:

This CPP was not addressed.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/17/2018 05:51 PM