

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 04/05/2019 05:20 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: The New Hampshire Department of Education (U282A190001)

Reader #1: *****

| | Points Possible | Points Scored |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Questions | | |
| Selection Criteria | | |
| Quality of Project Design | | |
| 1. Project Design | 15 | 10 |
| Objectives | | |
| 1. Objectives | 20 | 13 |
| Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants | | |
| 1. Subgrant Applicants | 15 | 10 |
| State Plan | | |
| 1. State Plan | 20 | 17 |
| Quality of the Management Plan | | |
| 1. Management Plan | 15 | 12 |
| Parent and Community Involvement | | |
| 1. Involvement | 10 | 6 |
| Flexibility | | |
| 1. Flexibility | 5 | 4 |
| Sub Total | 100 | 72 |
| Priority Questions | | |
| Competitive Preference Priority 2 | | |
| Equitable Financing | | |
| 1. Equitable Financing | 3 | 1 |
| Sub Total | 3 | 1 |
| Competitive Preference Priority 3 | | |
| Charter School Facilities | | |
| 1. Charter School Facilities | 4 | 2 |
| Sub Total | 4 | 2 |
| Competitive Preference Priority 4 | | |
| Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools/LEAs | | |
| 1. Best Practices | 2 | 1 |
| Sub Total | 2 | 1 |
| Competitive Preference Priority 5 | | |
| Serving At-Risk Students | | |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| 1. Serving At-Risk Students | 3 | 2 |
| Sub Total | 3 | 2 |
| Competitive Preference Priority 6 | | |
| Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing | | |
| 1. CharterSchool Authorizing | 4 | 2 |
| Sub Total | 4 | 2 |
| Total | 116 | 80 |

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Panel 1 - New Hampshire - 1: 84.282A

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: The New Hampshire Department of Education (U282A190001)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. Quality of the Project Design

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

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

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:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale; and

Strengths:

The applicant shares evidence of success from their 2010 CSP grant in which 20 new charter schools were opened, and the applicant connects these successes to their plans to award seven high-quality charter schools replication grants, five high-quality charter schools expansion grants, and 20 new charter schools start-up grants, with at least 10 of those being secondary schools that target at-risk student populations (e52). The latter component is consistent with program goals. For example, the applicant shares they will be offering priority funding consistent with the specific goals of the proposed program, specifically for educational best practices and for those sub-grantees that are planning to serve educationally disadvantaged populations, as determined through the state poverty rate of the intended school location and through state and federal accountability measures (e46). The applicant also suggests a priority for applicants who emphasize college-and-career readiness and work-based practices (e46).

Weaknesses:

The applicant attempts to demonstrate a rationale for the project, but the work outlined in the logic model includes activities that are not connected to research or evaluation findings (e52-e54). For example, the activities in Objective 1 references the subgrant process, but very little information is provided in the application regarding what this subgrant process will look like (e52) outside of hiring two FTE and launching an information campaign. Considering how often the applicant references their previous grant award in this section, it is unclear if and how their activities and growth expectations were informed by research or evaluation findings from the outcomes of current schools or projects.

Reader's Score: 6

2. 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:

Sub

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

Strengths:

The applicant clearly outlines the objectives necessary to meet successful outcomes in their proposal. For example, the applicant plans to sub-grant awards to seven high-quality charter schools that have already been identified for replication, five high-quality charter schools identified for expansion, and 20 new charter schools, with at least 10 of those being secondary schools that target at-risk student populations. Short-term and long-term outcomes are clearly delineated (e163).

Weaknesses:

Although the applicant clearly outlines the objectives in their proposal, the activities related to those objectives are ambiguous and it is difficult to connect the objective with the short-term and long-term outcomes. For example, the activities in Objective 1 reference the subgrant process, but very little information is provided in the application regarding what this subgrant process will look like (e52). Therefore, it is difficult to conclude that the subgrant process will lead to the project outcomes.

Reader's Score: 4

Selection Criteria - Objectives

- 1. The ambitiousness of the State entity's objectives for the quality charter school program carried out under this program.**

Note: In response to this criterion, an applicant may address (or cross reference) some or all of the components of application requirements (I)(A)-(G) in this notice, which require the applicant to provide a description of the State entity's objectives in running a quality charter school program and how the objectives of the program will be carried out.

Strengths:

The applicant provides five main objectives that guide the work that is planned in the proposal (e52-e54). Of the five objectives, two directly address plans to increase the number of high-quality charter schools with the overall outcome of improving student growth and achievement. Considering the applicant has a history of growing the number of charter schools in the state, the objective to grow the number of schools is feasible. The three remaining objectives address the applicant's plans to improve upon existing practices.

Weaknesses:

Three of the objectives involve the applicant improving upon existing practices – disseminating charter school best practices, empowering schools to be innovative and fiscally strong, and improving authorizer quality – yet even with evidence of previous work, the applicant did not clearly demonstrate that these objectives are ambitious.

For example, in Objective 3, the applicant provides examples of how they will disseminate best practices, but they do not provide a plan to ensure adoption of best practices so that there will be an increase in quality educational options statewide.

Considering at least two of the three activities under Objective 4 appear to be current practices, the applicant did not provide evidence of which innovative practices they will require and how site visits and professional development will empower schools to become strong, independent laboratories of innovation. Therefore it is not possible to ascertain the ambitiousness of Objective 4.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants

- 1. The likelihood that the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the program will meet those objectives and improve educational results for students.**

Strengths:

The applicant clearly demonstrates the strength of their general application process and uses this to suggest that eligible subgrantees will be successful before the contract is ever signed. Once signed, the applicant establishes a history of providing technical support to charter schools in the State. Of the 21 authorized subgrantees from their previous CSP grant, 19 opened and are in full compliance with their charter contract (e56). The applicant articulated that they are committed to providing technical support that is both proactive and "whenever and wherever requested." (e55) The proposal articulates the requirements and competitive priorities for receiving a sub-grant.

Weaknesses:

The applicant demonstrates the performance of public charter schools compared to traditional public schools at the district level (e56-e58), but the applicant does not provide aggregated data for each of the potential expansion or replication schools. The applicant did not provide evidence regarding how they will compare the academic outcomes of eligible replication and expansion subgrantees to their peers in the district public schools in their communities. Therefore it is not clear that the potential subgrantees would improve educational outcomes for students.

The applicant shares the general evaluation rubric for any charter school (e112-113) but does not differentiate what the evaluation will look like for eligible subgrantees. The applicant does not provide in their proposal an application for subgrantees or detail what is required specifically to be a subgrantee of a new school, a replication school, or an expansion school. The applicant notes that a request for application (RFA) will be released but does not detail what evaluations will be required in the RFA for schools as eligible subgrantees (e46). Therefore, a determination cannot fully be made based on the information provided regarding the likelihood that subgrantees will improve educational outcomes for students.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - State Plan

- 1. State Plan**

Reader's Score: 17

Sub

- 1. The State entity's plan to--**

- a. Adequately monitor the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program;**

Sub

Strengths:

The Applicant provides clear evidence of existing structures to monitor sub-grantees. For example, the NH Department of Education's Bureau of Federal Compliance would ensure strong fiscal management of grant funds (e61). This Bureau is also set up to identify early concerns and provide appropriate supports for the eligible applicants receiving sub-grants requiring technical assistance. Additionally, the NH Online Grants Management System is an accessible tool for both grantee and grantor to exchange pertinent information, access trainings, and submit reporting. This tool also allows the Department of Education to monitor day-to-day progress (e62).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

2. The State entity's plan to:

b. Work with the authorized public chartering agencies involved to avoid duplication of work for the charter schools and authorized public chartering agencies; and

Strengths:

To minimize reporting and the accompanying demands on charter school leaders, the applicant provides a work stream resulting from NH Department of Education's Charter School Accountability Process, which incorporates existing reporting requirements into its evidence base. Few additional documents are required, and those documents are typically relevant to unique school missions, bench-marking assessment outcomes, organizational sustainability, and financial sustainability, each of which are established by each charter school's board of directors (e63). Also, the annual accountability reports are inclusive of all requirements – both specific to the charter schools and required by state and federal rules of all traditional public schools.

Weaknesses:

While the applicant does provide clarity around the authorization and accountability process for all charter schools, the applicant does not provide clarity around the subgrantee application process. The applicant does not clearly explain the process for becoming a subgrantee, therefore it is unclear whether subgrantees will have to apply to be a subgrantee outside of the authorization application, leading to a duplication of work. The applicant also does not provide clarity around how and what information existing schools will need to provide to be a replication or expansion grantee or if that work is done in consult with the authorizer to avoid duplication of efforts. (e62-64)

Reader's Score: 4

3. The State entity's plan to:

c. Provide technical assistance and support for:

- i. The eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program; and**
- ii. Quality authorizing efforts in the State.**

Strengths:

The Applicant commits to partnering with NH's charter support organization, the New Hampshire Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NHAPCS), to develop technical support workshops for applicants before they apply and after they are authorized and will support eventual sub-grantees (e64). These workshops will be designed to the individual needs of the applicant. In a letter of support, NHAPCS commits to using this grant support to level the playing field between educationally disadvantaged students and their peers through technical assistance efforts (e91).

Sub

Weaknesses:

The technical assistance plan references best-practices regarding the renewal of charter schools but the applicant does not address how they will ensure high-quality authorizing efforts for all authorizers.

The applicant commits to providing technical assistance and support for eligible applicants receiving subgrants but places a lot of emphasis on meetings, trainings, workshops, and conferences, which are very input-heavy, and the applicant does not provide adequate evidence of how they will measure the effectiveness of these inputs (e55).

Reader's Score: 8

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:**

(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; and

(2) The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.

Strengths:

The applicant provides clearly articulated milestones for the proposed project (e72-e75). The applicant notes that the majority of work in the management plan will be done within the NH Department of Education's state-funded charter school office and their federal compliance office, each led by an administrator responsible for implementing program areas. This grant would provide for two people to support that work in the charter school office (e181-e182).

Weaknesses:

The applicant provides milestones for the proposed project, however the milestones are inconsistent and not connected with many direct actions that are critical to measuring progress to goals and objectives. For example, some milestones are immediate and directly related to the completion of project tasks (Objective 2, Activity 2) and others are distant and are more indirectly related to project tasks (Objective 2, Activity 3) (e73).

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Parent and Community Involvement

- 1. The State entity's plan to solicit and consider input from parents and other members of the community on the implementation and operation of charter schools in the State.**

Strengths:

The applicant provides evidence of existing structures and policies in the state that require charter schools to submit a comprehensive family and community engagement plan in their start-up application and in their renewal application. Charters are required by law to identify their philosophy of parent involvement via a Parent Family Involvement Policy as well as related plans and procedures, and a plan to develop and disseminate information to assist parents and pupils with decision making about their choice of school (e78). Additionally, NH Department of Education requires charters to make public key documents like Parent Involvement Policy, Mission Statement and Goals, Homework Guidelines, and School

and Classroom Visit Procedures on an annual basis (e78).

In addition to quantitative data like enrollment and retention numbers (e76), in their annual reporting, charter schools also report parent survey feedback and/or public comments at meetings. This information is collected via the Department of Education's iPlatform (e77). Quantitative information (performance measures and outcomes, graduation rate, etc) is made public via this platform and it is open to the public so charter school parents and the community can easily review school information (e77). The applicant also commits to supporting subgrantees with technical assistance regarding parent/community involvement.

Weaknesses:

Although the applicant commits to serving at-risk students, they do not provide comprehensive evidence of how they will meet parents – especially those of at-risk students – where they are. These specifics are necessary when planning to serve families that may not have the time or resources to spend several hours attending and traveling to a statewide conference (e77).

In addition, while charter schools in New Hampshire are currently required by law to identify their philosophy of parent involvement via a Parent Family Involvement Policy and related plans and procedures, as well as develop a plan to develop and disseminate information to assist parents and pupils with decision making about their choice of school (e78), the applicant does not detail their role in the implementation or support of these plans and does not indicate how they will gather data and inform practice from the feedback solicited from the implementation of these plans.

Reader's Score: **6**

Selection Criteria - Flexibility

- 1. The degree of flexibility afforded by the State's charter school law and how the State entity will work to maximize the flexibility provided to charter schools under such law.**

Strengths:

The applicant's narrative addresses multiple provisions in State law that affirms the flexibility offered to charter schools in NH. According to the NH charter school law (e79), chartered public schools are fully exempt from State laws and rules which otherwise apply to public or nonpublic schools, or local school boards or districts. The board has full authority to determine the charter school's organization, methods, and goals. Thus, charter schools have autonomy over enrollment, curriculum, staff recruitment, program design, facilities, finance, and partnerships with stakeholders and LEAs (e80).

Weaknesses:

The applicant details that they are currently working with the State Board of Education and the legislature to revise the state charter school law and administrative rules so that "the laws are expansive, inclusive, reflect the ever-changing landscape of charter school development, and maintain pace with innovation of charter schools across America" (e80). The applicant does not provide additional clarity regarding these revisions, specifically how the applicant will ensure any revisions will only improve or sustain flexibility in state law. Details on any specific discussions that have taken place among stakeholders (SBE, DoE, legislature, etc) and potential timetables regarding these revisions are lacking.

Reader's Score: **4**

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Equitable Financing

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Equitable Financing

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which the State in which it is located ensures equitable financing, as compared to traditional public schools, for charter schools and students in a prompt manner.

Strengths:

The applicant provides multiple examples of how the State is committed to ensuring charter schools receive equitable financing considering the local-revenue gap for charter schools. For example, charter schools authorized by the State Board of Education are given differential aid, plus an additional state tuition grant per-pupil to compensate for lack of local revenue (e23). Charter schools in NH receive three payments throughout the year of 30% each, which supports more predictive budgeting. Charter schools also receive a dollar-to-dollar match for categorical payments, except special education, which comes directly from the LEA.

Weaknesses:

The applicant notes that LEA-authorized charter schools in NH receive at least 80% of the district's average cost-per-pupil (e23) and therefore are not ensured completely equitable funding. For state-authorized charter schools, the applicant notes that those schools are not given access to local dollars; therefore the funding cannot be deemed equitable (e23).

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Charter School Facilities

1. Competitive Preference Priority 3: Charter School Facilities

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which the State in which it is located provides charter schools one or more of the following:

- a) Funding for facilities;**
- b) Assistance with facilities acquisition;**
- c) Access to public facilities;**
- d) The ability to share in bonds or mill levies;**
- e) The right of first refusal to purchase public school buildings; or**
- f) Low- or no-cost leasing privileges.**

Strengths:

NH charter schools are eligible to receive 30% of the annual lease payment incurred for the cost of leasing space. The School Building Aid Grant Program (SBAGP) allows SBE-authorized charter schools to receive funds for up to 30% of the annual cost of leasing space. The SBAGP also allows conversion charter schools to receive funds to cover up to 30 of the costs related to construction (e25), although conversion charter schools are not a key component of the applicant's plan. Additionally, the NH Public School Infrastructure fund gave \$29M to all public schools, including charter schools, for building and facility improvements, but it is unclear if that support is recurring and consistently available (e26).

Charter schools in NH do not receive help for facilities acquisition but are eligible to receive lease aid for leased space or building aid for construction (SBAGP) (e25). Additionally, ESSA provides flexibility to renovate school buildings to be in line with applicable NH statues and regulations and new charter schools can get one-time startup costs to support first-year transportation & Title 1 flexibility, although this is applicable to all public schools (e26) (e27).

Charter schools in NH often lease commercial space from an entity and/or property owner that is not exempt from property taxes and therefore do not have the property taxes attributable to the charter school's facilities to be taxed to the owner at the full market value of the facilities, reducing the tax burden on the charter school (e25).

In addition, NH charter schools have access to tax-exempt financing and additional financing assistance through State programs.

Weaknesses:

Charter schools can receive support via the SBAGPs if the building is owned by the LEA and under lease to the charter school, and the lease does not include an option to purchase the building, therefore charter schools may struggle with long-term planning (e24-e25).

In addition, charter schools in NH do not have the right of first refusal to purchase public school buildings (e26).

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority 4 - Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools/LEAs

1. Competitive Preference Priority 4: Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools and Local Educational Agencies

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which the State in which it is located uses best practices from charter schools to help improve struggling schools and local educational agencies.

Strengths:

Charter schools in NH are expected to be incubators and the applicant gives multiple examples of current charter schools that are offering an innovative public education to students throughout the state (ex: North Country Charter Academy formed by 20 LEAs to provide alternative learning opportunities for students at-risk of dropping out (e27)). This incubation complements the tension between traditional public schools and charter schools in that the charter school office within the NH Department of Education encourages partnerships with LEAs and with community partners like the community college system (e29).

Additionally, as evident in NH's ESSA plan, the applicant will work to improve struggling schools by labeling them as Targeted Support and Improvement Schools and Comprehensive Support Schools, then aligning support to those schools. The applicant will partner with two organizations with documented school turnaround expertise to focus on leadership, instruction, personalized education, and finances, which are critical levers to improve schools (e28).

Weaknesses:

NH's 2010 Federal CSP grant allowed them to curate and disseminate best practices and the applicant suggested that this sharing of best practices enabled all schools to benefit. Although the applicant notes that the best practices were evaluated by the Department for effectiveness in implementation, no evidence was given to conclude which achievement and/or growth outcomes were positive (e27).

Relatedly, the applicant plans for a "Best Practices" conference, with one of their goals to improve "LEA representation" and articulates that "struggling schools are strongly encouraged to attend," however the applicant does not provide details regarding how they will encourage struggling LEAs to attend (e28).

The applicant references partnering with two organizations that have documented school turnaround expertise to focus on

most levers that turnaround schools, but they do not detail what support specifically will be given to teachers and improving teacher practice (e28). The applicant does not specify how the monitoring of those school improvement domains will actually change human behavior, nor do they detail how this support will be given to charter schools that are not labeled Targeted Support and Improvement Schools and Comprehensive Support Schools.

Reader's Score: **1**

Competitive Preference Priority 5 - Serving At-Risk Students

1. Competitive Preference Priority 5: Serving At-Risk Students

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which it supports charter schools that serve at-risk students through activities such as dropout prevention, dropout recovery, or comprehensive career counseling services

Strengths:

New Hampshire is one of a few States in which charter schools enroll a slightly higher percentage of students with disabilities than traditional public schools (e34). NH requires that local district support for students with special needs follow the child to a charter school if they enroll (e34).

NH charter schools are not allowed to discriminate in their admission policies and are incentivized to serve students in low-performing subgroups. Additionally, educationally disadvantaged students in NH would receive targeted funding under the CSP grant if awarded via competitive scoring advantage (e35).

Eleven charter high schools are providing alternative programs and career pathways for their students, multiple charter schools are leading the way with personalized learning, and several charter schools are providing work-based learning opportunities for their students (e31-32).

Weaknesses:

While the applicant mentions the need to support NH's sparsely populated northern and western regions and a concentrated urban population in large southern cities, and that northern and western regions suffer from a lack of economies of scale which leads to at-risk student populations, their proposal does not provide targeted details of how the applicant will support those underserved schools (e30).

Reader's Score: **2**

Competitive Preference Priority 6 - Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing

1. Competitive Preference Priority 6: Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which it has taken steps to ensure that all authorized public chartering agencies implement best practices for charter school authorizing.

Strengths:

Charter schools in New Hampshire are either authorized by the SBE or an LEA. Every charter school, no matter from which authorizer, is held accountable to the same academic achievement standards expected of traditional public schools. All charters are granted for a period of five years and must be renewed every five years after that. Additionally, charter

schools are required annually to go through a multi-layered quality review process that ensures effective operation (e37). This annual review is made public (e38), as is an audit that is completed by the Department of Education every three years (e42).

To share best practices in charter school authorizing, the NH Department of Education allows LEAs to participate in the SBE-authorized charter renewal process and offers trainings, workshops, and best practice conferences for any and all charter schools and includes bi-monthly meetings.

Weaknesses:

LEA-authorizers are responsible for the oversight of the renewal process of their schools (e41). However, the applicant fails to provide details of the steps they would take to ensure LEAs employ best practices for charter school authorizing before schools are granted contracts, or even how they will ensure LEA-authorizers will adopt best-practices throughout the charter. They do infer that LEA authorizers participate in the same application process for new schools, but that is unclear based on reviewing the application (e39).

Reader's Score: **2**

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 04/05/2019 05:20 PM

Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: The New Hampshire Department of Education (U282A190001)

Reader #2: *****

| | Points Possible | Points Scored |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Questions | | |
| Selection Criteria | | |
| Quality of Project Design | | |
| 1. Project Design | 15 | 9 |
| Objectives | | |
| 1. Objectives | 20 | 16 |
| Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants | | |
| 1. Subgrant Applicants | 15 | 10 |
| State Plan | | |
| 1. State Plan | 20 | 17 |
| Quality of the Management Plan | | |
| 1. Management Plan | 15 | 11 |
| Parent and Community Involvement | | |
| 1. Involvement | 10 | 6 |
| Flexibility | | |
| 1. Flexibility | 5 | 5 |
| Sub Total | 100 | 74 |
| Priority Questions | | |
| Competitive Preference Priority 2 | | |
| Equitable Financing | | |
| 1. Equitable Financing | 3 | 2 |
| Sub Total | 3 | 2 |
| Competitive Preference Priority 3 | | |
| Charter School Facilities | | |
| 1. Charter School Facilities | 4 | 2 |
| Sub Total | 4 | 2 |
| Competitive Preference Priority 4 | | |
| Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools/LEAs | | |
| 1. Best Practices | 2 | 1 |
| Sub Total | 2 | 1 |
| Competitive Preference Priority 5 | | |
| Serving At-Risk Students | | |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| 1. Serving At-Risk Students | 3 | 3 |
| Sub Total | 3 | 3 |
| Competitive Preference Priority 6 | | |
| Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing | | |
| 1. CharterSchool Authorizing | 4 | 3 |
| Sub Total | 4 | 3 |
| Total | 116 | 85 |

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Panel 1 - New Hampshire - 1: 84.282A

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: The New Hampshire Department of Education (U282A190001)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. Quality of the Project Design

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

Reader's Score: 9

Sub

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:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale; and

Strengths:

The applicant provided a rationale for growing the charter movement in New Hampshire and has provided an ambitious plan to add twenty new schools which includes seven replications and five expansions. (e18) The extensive documentation provided by New Hampshire provided a clear focus on compliance and technical assistance as two key components of the state's rationale. There is a strong set of technical assistance to assure that charters are supported during the application, authorization, and grant award timelines. (e65)

New Hampshire shared the history of the current charter school growth based on a former CSP grant which supported the implementation of a significant portion of the current twenty-eight charters in the state. (e43-44) The applicant shared the design of the new grant implementation procedures which included a description of the process for applying, criteria that must be met for funding as well as technical assistance, monitoring and a brief description of the peer review components. (e44-50)

Weaknesses:

The narrative focused only on the outputs and processes for the grant implementation which did not provide indicators of all of the short-term or long-term outcomes defined in the logic model. (e163-66) The rationale was supported with a set of general activities listed as the outputs. The application could have provided examples of research-based strategies and interventions to enhance the understanding of the outcomes.

An example of the general nature of the rationale is that the applicant identified a funding priority to address at-risk students but there were not enough details to explain how this priority would be funded under the grant procedures. (e46) The only two strategies supporting this priority were a statewide promotional campaign and support by departmental staff (e50) but these are offered to all applicants. The strategies did not contain enough details to provide evidence of additional support to charters serving at-risk students. In addition, the applicant included a

Sub

replication and expansion proposal for charter high schools who do not meet the definition of high-quality charter schools which does not meet the funding parameters of the grant. (e50) There was a lack of actionable research-based strategies in the narrative to support the implementation of the specified outputs.

The applicant identified three needs for charter development including: 1) the implementation of charters in rural areas not currently served; 2) high-quality charters designed to serve educationally disadvantaged students (e72); and 3) a focus on developing charters to address college and career readiness. (e73) (e43-51 & e73-74) The proposal did not adequately address any of these needs with specific plans to utilize grant funds to support innovative charter development in these areas.

Reader's Score: 6

2. 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:

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

Strengths:

There was a written Logic Model with objectives, inputs, outputs, and short-term and long-term outcomes. (e163-166) The Management Plan (e72-75) was aligned to the specific objectives in the Logic Model and provided general implementation details that enhanced the objectives in the Logic Model.

The Logic Model did have specific growth outcomes defined including the opening of 20 new charter schools in five years and replication of 7 charters and a commitment to at least 10 of the new charters would be secondary schools targeting at-risk students. The logic model did include a statement that these objectives were based on the outcomes of the New Hampshire Charter School Office. (e163)

Weaknesses:

There was a written Logic Model, but it is not written in measurable terms for all of the objectives, inputs, outputs, and short-term and long-term outcomes (e163-166) which makes it an inadequate management tool. Only the short-term outcomes had a majority written in measurable terms with specific details to allow for assessment of the results. (e163-166)

Except for the short-term outcomes, the components of the logic model were ambiguous and did not provide specific details that would allow it to be utilized as a management and evaluative tool. Instead the majority of the model can only be used as a documentation instrument that merely indicates if an activity had been completed or not. (e163-166)

Reader's Score: 3

Selection Criteria - Objectives

1. The ambitiousness of the State entity's objectives for the quality charter school program carried out under this program.

Note: In response to this criterion, an applicant may address (or cross reference) some or all of the components of application requirements (I)(A)-(G) in this notice, which require the applicant to provide a description of the State entity's objectives in running a quality charter

school program and how the objectives of the program will be carried out.

Strengths:

The application includes authorization, implementation, and funding for twenty new charters. It also had a focused approach defining the specific number of schools; expanding (five) and replicating (seven) existing charter schools within the State. (e15) During the last CSP grant cycle, twenty charters were funded, illustrating a significant increase in planned growth and the desire to continue to support high-quality existing charter schools who have expansion and replication plans.

New Hampshire has already received, implemented and managed a past CSP grant. Many procedures and mechanisms are in place to allow for full implementation of the grant design. The number and types of documents in the Appendix (e130-168) that were directly aligned to grant activities provided evidence of a comprehensive grant process in place for grant making, monitoring, and technical assistance.

The budget includes the contractual costs for an external evaluator (e184-185) which includes a plan for multi-case qualitative study of evidence based best practices which is planned to be disseminated widely.

The application provided evidence of the strength and support of the Charter Support Office. They provide a wide array of technical assistance (e55) and participate in establishing Collaborative partnerships. The ability to formalize collaborative partnership is a strength of the application. One example is the new collaborative partnership with the Community College System of New Hampshire and the developers of the New Hampshire Career Academy. (e29)

Weaknesses:

The state's rationale is supported with extensive documentation focusing on compliance and technical assistance however, other areas of emphasis such as innovation were not included within the rationale. There were a few examples of innovative charters within the state but virtually no focus on how New Hampshire would support implementation of new innovative designs. Instead, the focus was on continuing to build support for expansion and replication of existing models. (e163)

The commitment to share best practices was not comprehensively developed within the narrative to assure full implementation. (e73-74)

Every closure, nonrenewal, or inability of a charter application to be approved was due to fiscal issues (e70) and the application narrative did not provide enough information on how this was going to be addressed. Based on the current management plan provided (e72-74), grant management in terms of fiscal accountability is not addressed. The one objective that mentions fiscal components (objective 4) had performance measures that were not written in measurable terms (e74) and would not provide any assistance in the rigorous fiscal accountability needed to successfully implement the grant provisions. (e74) A fiscal timeline and plan would have strengthened the proposal and provided guidance to the grantees when funded.

Reader's Score: 16

Selection Criteria - Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants

- 1. The likelihood that the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the program will meet those objectives and improve educational results for students.**

Strengths:

New Hampshire has a high standard for its charter schools based on the requirement that the charters must meet or exceed state academic standards. In order to assure success, New Hampshire has established a rigorous charter application and authorization process with support from the Charter School Office which has created a strong set of successful charter schools. (e55) Evidence of the success of these supports is illustrated based on data provided by the applicant from their last CSP grant where twenty charters were funded with 19 opened with full compliance and one is to open this year. (e56)

New Hampshire has established a strong system of support for charter schools with most services delivered by the Charter School Office from inception of a charter model to full implementation. The array of supports including call-in help desk, webinars, onsite visits, bi-monthly meetings, training workshops, technical assistance upon request and monitoring of implementation. (e55) The fact that since 2005, only five charter schools have been closed or denied reauthorization is evidence of the importance of the support system to the sustainability of charter growth. (e70)

Academic achievement results by charter schools are critical to achieving the goal of meeting or exceeding state academic standards. New Hampshire has an impressive track record with charters outperforming district schools on both the Smarter Balanced and the New England Common Assessment Program. (e56-58)

Weaknesses:

The proposal did not include enough details regarding the grant application process, differentiated funding based on the type of grant, and other implementation requirements that would be included in the RFA sent to schools. Since the RFA would detail the specific criteria that grants would be awarded based upon, it is not possible to make a determination if the subgrantees will be successful since the RFA or at least relevant descriptions were not included in the proposal. (e46)

The information in Appendix F (e173-177) did not provide the clarity regarding the application process or define differentiated funding amounts per grant type.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - State Plan**1. State Plan**

Reader's Score: 17

Sub**1. The State entity's plan to--**

- a. Adequately monitor the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program;**

Strengths:

New Hampshire charter school law includes two significant requirements regarding federal funds including: 1) the Commissioner shall apply for all federal funding available to charter schools and 2) that any federal grant funding received by the charter student's home district will be directed on a per pupil basis to the charter serving the district's students. (e60)

Several divisions of the State Department of Education have responsibility to monitor the subgrants including: 1)

Sub

Bureau of Federal Compliance that provides technical assistance and monitors subgrantee as part of the DOE's review process: (e61) 2) Charter School Office provides technical assistance and monitors the project benchmarks with review of charter progress reports; (e62) and 3) New Hampshire Online Grants Management System that assists department staff in monitoring and tracking expenditures and determining if these are allowable expenses. (e62)

Weaknesses:

The applicant notes that initially the department will use monitoring reviews of data to identify areas of concern with grant management issues as defined in objective 4.2. (e54) However, objective 4.2 did not provide enough information to assess what would be included in the monitoring reviews and the timeline for providing feedback to the grantees. The process is not systematized with a timeline and well defined activities therefore the quality of the reviews based on the grantees knowing the requirements of monitoring is not evident. Site visits were included in this objective to ensure accountability and provide constructive recommendations but the outcome statement was that the CSO team visits 10 schools per year. Based on the information provided there is a lack of clarity regarding when monitoring would result in a required site visit. (e61)

Reader's Score: 4

2. The State entity's plan to:

- b. Work with the authorized public chartering agencies involved to avoid duplication of work for the charter schools and authorized public chartering agencies; and**

Strengths:

New Hampshire has included federal reporting requirements into the Charter School Accountability Process (e63) which includes data utilized in meeting the state statute requirement for the annual accountability and grant progress reports therefore eliminating duplication. Evidence of the success of these supports is that during the last CSP grant, twenty charters were funded with 19 opened with full compliance and one is scheduled to open this year. (e44)

Weaknesses:

There was no mention of the use of school-based historic collected data utilized as a component of the grant application for replication or expansion grants. This should be addressed in the application process description so the subgrantees clearly understands the grant requirements. An attempt should be made to reduce and limit duplication of components required for the grants application process. It was not clear if a school could submit an expansion or replication grant at any time and how that would impact their authorization review status. The criteria should also reflect that all replication and expansion grant applicants must meet the federal definition of highly qualified prior to the application process.

Reader's Score: 4

3. The State entity's plan to:

- c. Provide technical assistance and support for:**

- i. The eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program; and**
- ii. Quality authorizing efforts in the State.**

Strengths:

The collaborative partnership between the Charter Support Organization and the New Hampshire Alliance for Public Charter Schools strengthens the already impressive support and technical assistance offerings provided to the

Sub

state's charter schools. (e64) with specific pre and post authorization workshops.

The specialized bi-monthly meetings held by the Charter Support Office provides a continuous learning plan for charter school personnel. (e66)

Objective 3 (e73) establishes a plan to disseminate best practices that utilizes the charter staff as the provider of technical assistance. This plan also acknowledges the massive set of data collected annually on charter performance and attempts to establish strategies that would utilize this data in defining technical assistance and training needs that allows for systematic access to best practices instead of an annual conference which provides limited exposure.

The on-site renewal monitoring visit is a critical aspect of the renewal that involves a wide set of stakeholders in the school's examination prior to renewal. (e67)

Documentation of past actions by the authorizers was reported and included the closures, non-renewals and denial of applications with reasons documented supporting the decisions. (e70-71)

The Appendix did contain the Renewal Guide, Site Visit (e130-158), Administrative Rules for Renewals (e 159-161), the Timeline for the Charter Renewal Process (e167-168) and the Charter Renewal Rubric (e116-126). The documentation process was comprehensive.

Weaknesses:

While the process of authorization was clearly defined with documents detailing the process, there were still specific implementation components that were not provided. For example, the on-site monitoring visit is to be led by the Department or a designee. (e67) There was a lack of information about who the designee might be and how they would be trained for the process. While the renewal rubric, which appeared to be a set of interview questions with no rubric, was in the Appendix (e116-126), there was no information about how the process was systematized or the elements of the report generated from the site visit, or how it would be shared with the charter school and the authorizer. (e68)

Reader's Score: 9

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:**

(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; and

(2) The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.

Strengths:

The proposal includes the creation of two positions to provide technical assistance to applicants and job descriptions are included in the Appendix (e127-129) which addresses the need for adequate time commitments.

The logic model was utilized as the basis of the management plan and included objectives, performance measures, activities, timelines, budget/resources, responsibility and milestones. (e 72-75) The management plan does provide a set of factors that can document the completion of activities or milestones designed to support grant implementation.

Weaknesses:

In the past, two Departments - the charter school office and the federal compliance office - shared responsibility for the implementation of the grant. With the addition of two new staff, it was unclear where the two new positions would be housed. After reviewing the job descriptions (e127-129) the duties do not address the critical fiscal management tasks. This is significant because finances were listed as a reason for every non-renewal or closure in New Hampshire. (e70-71)

There were budget resources identified within the management plan as a specific line item under each activity, but the information was categories of funding and did not include actual budgetary amounts. A major portion of the grant management tasks for the CSP grant is to assure correct use of subgrant funding. Based on the current management plan, grant management in terms of fiscal accountability is not adequately addressed. The one objective that mentions fiscal (objective #4) does not include written measurable performance measures. (e74)

Reader's Score: 11

Selection Criteria - Parent and Community Involvement**1. The State entity's plan to solicit and consider input from parents and other members of the community on the implementation and operation of charter schools in the State.****Strengths:**

The state requires a comprehensive family and community engagement plan in each start-up application (e76). In addition, the applicant will provide specific technical assistance to the applicants and have identified suggested engagement practices for charters to implement. (e78)

There is a structured annual report based on both quantitative and qualitative data from each charter school annually focusing on five questions. (e76) The NHDOE uses this data to evaluate and monitor and they list a series of examples on its use.

The applicant plans to use grant funds to strengthen parent and community involvement with a conference and training for conference developers demonstrating parent and community involvement. (e77)

Weaknesses:

While the state requires a comprehensive family and community engagement plan in each start-up application (e76) there are no details provided based on an analysis of these submitted documents.

The budget narrative did not indicate funding for the parental conference. (e179-185)

There were not strategies designed to increase input from parents or community members but rather focus on involvement such as highlighting suggested trainings, attending State Board meetings and other one-way communication strategies to educate parents. (e76-77)

Reader's Score: **6**

Selection Criteria - Flexibility

- 1. The degree of flexibility afforded by the State's charter school law and how the State entity will work to maximize the flexibility provided to charter schools under such law.**

Strengths:

Charter school flexibility is built into the New Hampshire statutes. It specifically provides autonomy over enrollment, curriculum, staff recruitment, program design, facilities, finance, and stakeholder partnerships. (e79)

The applicant documented specific ESSA flexibilities that authorize grant funds for charter use. (e79) Specifically ESSA flexibilities (Section 4304(h)) which authorizes grant funds for renovations to buildings allowing charters to be compliant with regulations. Also, the flexibility for new charters to use grant funds to establish one-time startup costs for transportation.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: **5**

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Equitable Financing

- 1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Equitable Financing**

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which the State in which it is located ensures equitable financing, as compared to traditional public schools, for charter schools and students in a prompt manner.

Strengths:

Equitable funding of charter schools in New Hampshire is a work in progress. A number of strategies have been implemented to address the need of equitable financing of charter schools. One of the practices was to provide all schools full access to federal and state funding. Specific categories of funding distributed to both charters and public schools include state building aid, infrastructure funding, internet connectivity and lease aid funding. (e24)

To assure an equitable funding system, there is a specific category of funding entitled a state tuition grant of \$3,480 per pupil that is only provided to state authorized charter schools. This additional state funding categorical aid is designed to specifically address the lack of ability of charters to generate local taxes to support the students they serve. (e23) This additional funding is evidence of the state's attempt to equalize funding of charter schools.

Weaknesses:

While equitable funding strategies are being implemented, the facilitation of funding to the schools does not use the same procedures. The release of school funding is different for public and charter schools in New Hampshire. Public schools receive payments four times a year with the first two at 20% and the final two at 30%. Charter Schools receive three

payments of 30% based on real-time enrollments with a final payment with the End of Year Tuition Report. (e23) There was not an adequate explanation of why there needs to be a different funding distribution policy and since charters have 10% of funding held back until the end of the year this can impact the use of funds to meet student needs during the school's academic year.

The other significant funding variation is that LEA authorized charter schools are not eligible to receive the State Tuition grant of \$3,480 per student in additional funding demonstrating a lack of equity. (e23)

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Charter School Facilities

1. Competitive Preference Priority 3: Charter School Facilities

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which the State in which it is located provides charter schools one or more of the following:

- a) Funding for facilities;**
- b) Assistance with facilities acquisition;**
- c) Access to public facilities;**
- d) The ability to share in bonds or mill levies;**
- e) The right of first refusal to purchase public school buildings; or**
- f) Low- or no-cost leasing privileges.**

Strengths:

There have been some attempts to address the charter school facility issue in New Hampshire by the State. (e26) The state has also developed an opportunity for charters to rent a facility with a tax exemption (e25) and access to tax-exempt financing via the New Hampshire Health and Education Facilities Authorities and the New Hampshire Municipal Bond Bank. (e26)

The state allows charter schools to access the competitive Public School Infrastructure Grant and twenty-four charters were awarded funding to provide an E-rate match, address safety issues, and/or improve security. (e26)

Weaknesses:

Charter schools only receive 30% of costs of facilities under the current School Building Aid Grant (e25) and these funds can only be used for leasing. The lease contract has to specifically NOT contain an option to purchase which significantly impacts the charters ability to establish a long-term plan for facilities.

There is no assistance in facility acquisition by any state agency or nonprofit designed to support charter development. (e25-26)

New Hampshire has significant issues with support of charter school facilities without evidence of a systematic plan to address long-term facility development for charter schools. There are no provisions for access to public facilities or the right of first refusal in purchasing public school facilities. (e25-26)

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority 4 - Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools/LEAs

1. Competitive Preference Priority 4: Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools and Local Educational Agencies

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which the State in which it is located uses best practices from charter schools to help improve struggling schools and local educational agencies.

Strengths:

The use of past CSP funding to systematically identify and codify best practices with on-site visits and examination of student data is an exemplary practice (e27-28) when shared with struggling schools. Based on the fact that one of the 5 objectives (Objective 3) focuses specifically on developing new strategies that support charter staff providing technical assistance by sharing their own identified best practices provides evidence of the importance of this issue. (e73) Objective 3 is comprehensive with five performance measures. There will be the development of a survey to allow for the analysis of the effectiveness of implementation and to establish an implementation rate. (e74)

At the state level, the leadership of the Charter School Office has built collaborative partnerships that support innovative charters (e27, e29) which include multiple school district partners. Several examples of their successes in sharing best practices include the strategies of using innovative “incubators” containing both public school and charter participants to address alternative learning (e27) and the “Best Practices” conference. (e28)

Weaknesses:

Utilizing past CSP funding, specific strategies and conferences have been established to implement the dissemination of best practices from charter schools but there was no evidence of the successful implementation in struggling schools or LEAs. (e28)

Unfortunately, the Best Practice Conference was only attended by charter school and Department of Education staff and there were no strategies listed in Objective 3 that were specifically designed to expand the audience to include traditional public schools in learning about best practices. (e28, e73-74)

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 5 - Serving At-Risk Students

1. Competitive Preference Priority 5: Serving At-Risk Students

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which it supports charter schools that serve at-risk students through activities such as dropout prevention, dropout recovery, or comprehensive career counseling services

Strengths:

The New Hampshire Department of Education provides additional start-up funding for charter schools locating in identified Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) schools and Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools. (e30) The CSP grant plans to provide more funding for charters who target educationally disadvantaged students. (e35)

Based on a Lumina Foundation Grant, there has been a systematic design of eleven charter high schools that focus on

addressing the dropout rate by providing alternative programs and pathways for secondary school success resulting in a diploma. (e30-32)

New Hampshire has a higher rate of students with disabilities in charter schools as compared to public schools.

New Hampshire has developed in response to the state standard on Extended Learning Opportunities an array of strategies that support career and technical education and connecting secondary students to other educational opportunities at regional career and technical centers or within a focused local set of career clusters and pathways. (e35-36) These initiatives provide opportunities for students who have not necessarily been successful in traditional learning environments.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority 6 - Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing

1. Competitive Preference Priority 6: Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which it has taken steps to ensure that all authorized public chartering agencies implement best practices for charter school authorizing.

Strengths:

New Hampshire has designed a rigorous charter application process for state board authorizing. The application process was comprehensive including a systematic review process of initial, legal, (e39) and technical review with scoring focusing on 30 specific criteria followed by a public hearing with the authorizer. (e40-41)

Based on law, New Hampshire has established a very structured set of charter monitoring and review processes that make up a multi-year quality assurance review (Appendix F Renewal Guide (e130-168) with Application (e116-126) and Renewal Rubric (e112-15)) leading to renewal, nonrenewal, or revocation. There is a published timeline of the authorization process. (e92-93) The applicant provided the timeline for school reports, surveys, forms and events (e94-96) which indicate the significant documentation provided annually from charter schools. The authorizer utilizes that data and also focuses annually on academic performance and fiscal audits (e37) based on the charter's annual accountability report in the renewal process. (e38)

There is a joint legislative oversight committee that meets annually to monitor state laws and make recommendations for any necessary changes based on current data. (e37) The State Board of Education makes an annual report to this committee sharing charter approvals and denials. (e42) These two strategies support the charter authorizing process in the state and serve as a set of checks and balances by other governmental bodies.

Weaknesses:

There are two types of authorizing processes – state authorization and LEA authorization, however a clearly defined set of differences and similarities between the two processes was not provided within the application. (e22) There was a lack of clarity about the components of the two authorizing processes. The application did not provide clarity on the differences in process, outcomes, funding or provide enough details to allow a full evaluation of the state's authorizing process.

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 04/05/2019 05:20 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 04/05/2019 05:20 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: The New Hampshire Department of Education (U282A190001)

Reader #3: *****

| | Points Possible | Points Scored |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Questions | | |
| Selection Criteria | | |
| Quality of Project Design | | |
| 1. Project Design | 15 | 10 |
| Objectives | | |
| 1. Objectives | 20 | 17 |
| Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants | | |
| 1. Subgrant Applicants | 15 | 11 |
| State Plan | | |
| 1. State Plan | 20 | 19 |
| Quality of the Management Plan | | |
| 1. Management Plan | 15 | 12 |
| Parent and Community Involvement | | |
| 1. Involvement | 10 | 7 |
| Flexibility | | |
| 1. Flexibility | 5 | 5 |
| Sub Total | 100 | 81 |
| Priority Questions | | |
| Competitive Preference Priority 2 | | |
| Equitable Financing | | |
| 1. Equitable Financing | 3 | 1 |
| Sub Total | 3 | 1 |
| Competitive Preference Priority 3 | | |
| Charter School Facilities | | |
| 1. Charter School Facilities | 4 | 2 |
| Sub Total | 4 | 2 |
| Competitive Preference Priority 4 | | |
| Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools/LEAs | | |
| 1. Best Practices | 2 | 1 |
| Sub Total | 2 | 1 |
| Competitive Preference Priority 5 | | |
| Serving At-Risk Students | | |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| 1. Serving At-Risk Students | 3 | 3 |
| Sub Total | 3 | 3 |
| Competitive Preference Priority 6 | | |
| Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing | | |
| 1. CharterSchool Authorizing | 4 | 3 |
| Sub Total | 4 | 3 |
| Total | 116 | 91 |

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Panel 1 - New Hampshire - 1: 84.282A

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: The New Hampshire Department of Education (U282A190001)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. Quality of the Project Design

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

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

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:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale; and

Strengths:

The applicant explains its history in successfully launching charter schools and the critical role of charters in serving the underserved students that are found in the low-income areas in the north and west areas of the state (e43) and the continued need for more schools, as noted on page e44 where the applicant highlights that some "LEAs provide funds for district students to attend charter schools even though they are not required to do so by law."

Another strength is found in the clearly explained goal of continued growth in charter movement (e44) in order to meet the needs of the most underserved students across the state. Additionally, the application details the future and pressing need for additional funding to support the charter schools slated to open in the fall of 2019 (e45) and in the future (e45).

An additional strength is seen in the State's commitment to support charter schools that provide services to those at-risk of dropping out and to educationally disadvantaged students. The applicant notes that 11 of the 13 charter high schools currently in operation serve at-risk students and documents the State's pledge to support more schools that have missions aligned to the NIA CPP5 (e44).

Sub

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not cite research related to its project components or the likelihood that said activities will produce the defined outcomes.

While the narrative describing the need and rationale has its strengths, it appears somewhat incomplete as compared to the logic model. The rationale describes the need and goals in the expansion of charter schools and the critical role in the State's comprehensive plan, but fails to mention of a pressing need for authorizer improvements. The information presented in the logic model (e166) appears to almost contradict some of the information that is highlighted elsewhere as the strengths of the authorizing process, as it discusses "rebuilding the authorization process" and engaging a contractor to work with stakeholders to build a rigorous authorization process (e166).

Reader's Score: 6

2. 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:

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

Strengths:

The applicant provides a logic model (e163-166) which highlights clear goals and measurable outcomes with defined timeframes for the activities (e163-166), such as 20 new charter schools that will be created over five years, 80% of the charter schools will attend the workshops and state conference (e164-165), and 10 partnerships will be developed within the five years of the grant.

Weaknesses:

The application does not clearly articulate the relationship between the key components of the project and the proposed related outcomes.

Reader's Score: 4

1. The ambitiousness of the State entity's objectives for the quality charter school program carried out under this program.

Note: In response to this criterion, an applicant may address (or cross reference) some or all of the components of application requirements (I)(A)-(G) in this notice, which require the applicant to provide a description of the State entity's objectives in running a quality charter school program and how the objectives of the program will be carried out.

Strengths:

The applicant plans to increase, expand or replicate high quality charter schools, with an emphasis on schools that serve at-risk, economically, educationally disadvantaged students in rural and urban areas (e72). Specifically, the applicant plans to create 20 new charter schools, at least 10 of which will be secondary schools targeting at-risk students (e163).

Additionally, the applicant plans to use CSP funds to improve student growth, achievement and graduation rates (e73) by ensuring that subgrant recipients meet or exceed growth and assessment accountability measures as written in their contracts (e163).

Also noted as an objective is the goal of creating schools that are fiscally strong, independent laboratories of innovation (e74) which are sustainable beyond the lifespan of the CSP grant and use federal funding sources available to them to meet the needs of the students, as noted by the outcome measure of 90% of charter schools accessing and using federal funds (e73 and e164).

The applicant also notes the objectives of broadly disseminating charter school best practices to all schools to increase quality educational options statewide (e73 and e164-165) and the plan to strengthen and support authorizer quality by promoting the adoption of authorizer best practices. Specifically, the applicant proposes to improve the state's authorizing system and to work with legislators, authorizers, the NH CSO and stakeholders to build a rigorous state authorizing system with strong oversight and clear practices and procedures (e75 and e166).

Weaknesses:

Though the applicant has provided ambitious goals and related activities, it is unclear if the plan is feasible even given the added capacity of new FTEs and contracted support.

Reader's Score: 17

Selection Criteria - Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants

1. The likelihood that the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the program will meet those objectives and improve educational results for students.

Strengths:

The applicant notes that it has a history of reviewing, selecting and monitoring schools to ensure they are meeting their educational objectives, and highlights that 19 of the 21 charter schools authorized from 2010-2018 are operational and in full compliance (e55-56).

The applicant notes that the grants will be awarded in a competitive manner (e44) using a rolling deadline and notes that the applications will be evaluated by peer reviewers that are selected from a variety of sources including local public districts, charter board trustees, operators, experts and department staff (e47). These reviewers will be trained in advance to ensure that they have an understanding of the federal law, state charter law, and the public charter priorities and objectives (e47).

The applicants will be reviewed on the following criteria as well as extensive criteria included within the subgrant application, including but not limited to: commitment to quality curriculum, reasonableness of financial request and budget plan for financial sustainability, the adequacy of the work plan to achieve objectives on time and within budget with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, as well as the technical capacity of the board of trustees and leaders to ensure a successful school (e47).

In addition to ensuring that the subgrant applicants chosen are of high quality, the state highlights its history of successful authorization and both existing and grant funded activities it will engage in to monitor and support the subgrantees in achieving outcomes. As part of the existing process to monitor new charter schools, the Department conducts a program audit in the school's first year and the charter school is required to evaluate and submit the educational progress of each student, using the State's improvement and assessment program (e37). And, the applicant notes additional activities to ensure sub-applicant quality performance as part of the SEA grant request, including: technical assistance as required and as needed, training (e62), monitoring (e62) and onsite visits for 10 subgrantees per year (e45), monthly check-ins, and biannual best practice conferences.

Finally, the applicant elaborates on the quality of the existing charter movement in the state by showing movement-wide proficiency scores in which charter students, on average, outperform district students in both reading and math (e57) and the applicant identifies 7 schools that meet the federal definition of high quality (e18) and are candidates for replication and 5 schools that are candidates for expansion (e48).

Weaknesses:

There is a lack of clarity about the differences in the application process for the three types of grant applicants, and the applicant does not provide an RFA or other information to help clarify how it will define high quality with regards to applicants for the replication grant.

The state cites that the subgrant applications will be required to score 75% against the application rubric (e47). This appears to be a low threshold for ensure quality grantees.

Reader's Score: 11

Selection Criteria - State Plan

1. State Plan

Reader's Score: 19

Sub

1. The State entity's plan to--

- a. **Adequately monitor the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program;**

Strengths:

The applicant highlights both existing and grant funded activities to monitor subgrantees. As part of the existing process to monitor new charter schools, the Department conducts a program audit in the school's first year and the charter school is required to evaluate and submit the educational progress of each student, using the State's improvement and assessment program (e37).

Also included in the annual report requirements are evidences of the organizations financial sustainability (e63). The Department uses the information to monitor performance (e38).

The applicant also notes additional activities to monitor the grantees as part of the SEA grant request, including monitoring reviews to identify any potential concerns and ensure the school is meeting its projected benchmarks (e61), monthly check-ins (e62) and onsite visits for 10 subgrantees per year (e45). Additionally, the NH DOE Bureau of Federal Compliance will monitor to ensure the grant recipients are in compliance with fiscal grant and risk related requirements (e61).

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

2. The State entity's plan to:

- b. **Work with the authorized public chartering agencies involved to avoid duplication of work for the charter schools and authorized public chartering agencies; and**

Strengths:

The applicant highlights that it will work to avoid duplication of efforts for schools by using the existing charter accountability reports in its application evaluation and grantee monitoring process (e63).

Also noted is the commitment to monitor grantee performance and compliance using the existing submissions of reports and the data found in the data center and the state provided compliance mechanisms. (e63).

The applicant highlights that schools maintain the flexibility to submit information and reporting evidence in the least cumbersome manner (e63).

Weaknesses:

The plan does not clearly state how it is working specifically with authorizers to avoid duplication of their effort.

Reader's Score: 4

3. The State entity's plan to:

- c. Provide technical assistance and support for:**
 - i. The eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program; and**
 - ii. Quality authorizing efforts in the State.**

Strengths:

The applicant documents a variety of ways it will support eligible applicants, including biannual, pre-authorization and post-authorization workshops and ongoing technical support sessions in coordination with the state charter support organization (e64).

Additional support to grantees will be offered through the following: a call-in help desk, onsite visits, rolling technical support sessions, and bimonthly regional meetings (e64).

On pages e64-e65, the applicant describes in detail the topics and information to be covered in the grantee support workshops and via the technical support.

Also noted is the Department's commitment to provide support in continuous improvement via the process of annual program review (e66), the biannual best practices conference, new business administrator training as needed, and bimonthly department meetings that address school program specific topics such as Title 2 and Title 4, National School Lunch Program, special education, and other topics (e66).

Finally, the applicant will provide onsite visits for 10 subgrantees per year (e45) and monthly check-ins for grant recipients (e45).

The applicant details several ways in which it will provide technical assistance to support quality authorizing efforts in the state, including Identifying best authorizing best practices for authorization, contracts, oversight corrective action and renewal; defining clear practices and procedures; and providing comprehensive training and support (e75 and e166).

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 10

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:**

(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; and

(2) The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.

Strengths:

The applicant provides a management plan and related documentation that defines clear milestones and time-bound performance measures to achieve the stated objectives on time and within budget.

Each activity listed in the plan specifies the owners, resources, milestones, and related timeline (e72-75), and the applicant documents clear performance measures with deadlines for achievement related to each of the grant objectives (e72-75 and e163-166).

The applicant sufficiently addresses the time commitment, and related duties of the grant funded personnel and highlights the additional capacity added through key department staff and strategic or contracted partners as noted below.

- In the evidence provided, the applicant notes that the state has recently created two departments, a state charter schools office and a federal compliance office with state funded staff positions which will add capacity and oversight to the project beyond grant related FTEs (e71).
- The applicant also details time allocation for both new positions noting percent of time allocated to technical assistance versus administration (e181-182).
- The applicant's expanded capacity will be combined with both the state charter support organization and contracted partner capacity in order to accomplish the activities and achieve the stated objectives (e72-75).

Weaknesses:

Though the plan is thorough and additional capacity is added via partnerships, the plan is very ambitious and there is some question as to the ability to execute on all priorities at the highest level given the breadth of the objectives.

Reader's Score: **12**

Selection Criteria - Parent and Community Involvement

- 1. The State entity's plan to solicit and consider input from parents and other members of the community on the implementation and operation of charter schools in the State.**

Strengths:

In the top paragraph of page e77, the applicant describes the state portal, accessible to the public, to keep the public informed and enable them to easily review the performance of public schools, including charter schools (e169).

The applicant also highlights existing expectations of charter schools to include parent and family engagement within their application (e114) as a requirement in the school's strategic plan. Page e77 highlights the related instructions to: seek parent and family representation to advise the school on matters and to create a Parent Family Involvement Policy that includes family-school partnership. Also noted are the requirements to distribute key documents, communicate frequently with parents, families, students, and community members and identify what parents and families can do to support their students' learning at home.

The applicant sufficiently addresses these criteria more specifically in new activities to be undertaken if approved for the grant. If approved, the applicant will offer training and assistance to developers and their governing boards on effective parent and community involvement (e77) and create an annual conference to convene parents, board members, state leaders, local districts and others together to discuss important charter issues (e77).

The applicant also notes the ability for parents and community members to attend the State Board of Education meetings to offer input on a monthly basis (e77).

Weaknesses:

Though the applicant addressed how and via what methods they would solicit parent and other community input, it was unclear how they would consider the input or by what process they would determine to move forward with related actions or incorporate recommendations offered.

Additionally, though parent and stakeholder convening is noted as an activity, it is not specifically shown in the budget narrative as having funds allocated to it (e179-185).

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - Flexibility

- 1. The degree of flexibility afforded by the State's charter school law and how the State entity will work to maximize the flexibility provided to charter schools under such law.**

Strengths:

The applicant cites the specific provisions of flexibility under state law (e171), including autonomy over enrollment, curriculum, staff recruitment, program design, facilities, finance, and partnerships. These freedoms are also noted throughout the charter application rubric (e112-115).

Additional notations of flexibilities relate to ESSA [Section 4303(h)] and ESSA Title I flexibilities are also cited within the application (e79-80).

Offered as a commitment to maximize the flexibilities, the applicant notes current engagement with the State Board of Education and legislature to ensure the charter school laws are expansive and innovative (e80).

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Equitable Financing

- 1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Equitable Financing**

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which the State in which it is located ensures equitable financing, as compared to traditional public schools, for charter schools and students in a prompt manner.

Strengths:

Charter schools are paid in a prompt manner. As noted on page e23, charter schools authorized by the SBE are paid three payments throughout the year of 30% each. The payments are based on real time enrollment with a final settle up payment at the end of the year, which is comparable to traditional public schools which are paid four times a year.

Weaknesses:

Though the applicant provides appropriate detail related to the per pupil funding provided to both the LEA authorized and the SBE authorized charter schools (e23), the weaknesses are found in the equity of the funding provided as well as the lack of specificity related to prompt payments for LEA authorized charters (e23).

As seen on page e23 a significant funding discrepancy still exists for both SBE and LEA authorized charter schools, with LEA charter schools receiving 80% and SBE charters schools receiving 74% (e23-24) of the \$15,866 average per pupil funding that traditional district schools receive.

Finally, because the applicant failed to note information related to the prompt payment of LEA charter schools, it is unclear if LEA authorized charter schools receive funding in a timely manner (e23).

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Charter School Facilities**1. Competitive Preference Priority 3: Charter School Facilities**

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which the State in which it is located provides charter schools one or more of the following:

- a) Funding for facilities;**
- b) Assistance with facilities acquisition;**
- c) Access to public facilities;**
- d) The ability to share in bonds or mill levies;**
- e) The right of first refusal to purchase public school buildings; or**
- f) Low- or no-cost leasing privileges.**

Strengths:

Appropriate evidence in support of funding for facilities is detailed on page e24-25, "NH public charter schools are eligible to receive 30% of the annual lease payment incurred for the cost of leasing space." The applicant also highlights that this annual lease payment support is offered to both the SBE and the LEA authorized charter schools (e25).

The applicant also highlights the eligibility of charter schools to receive state aid for the purposes of acquiring land or buildings or for construction or improving the charter school building through various avenues including the NH Health and Education Facilities Authority and they note the ability of charter schools to access tax-exempt financing through the NH Municipal Bond Bank (e26).

Finally, the applicant details the option for charter schools to participate in the facilities support offered through the NH Public School Infrastructure Fund (e26). This provision provides funding to support facilities improvements including: fiber connections and safety and security deficiencies at the charter school (e26).

Weaknesses:

The level of funding provided to charter schools is not equal to the funding provided to traditional public schools, as evidenced in the fact that charter schools are offered funds to cover a mere 30% of their lease expenses (e25). And, while the applicant references evidence of State support for CPP3, Charter School Facilities, under several of the activities, the evidence provided appears to be irrelevant or not directly related to the activity stated in the NIA.

Reader's Score: **2**

Competitive Preference Priority 4 - Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools/LEAs**1. Competitive Preference Priority 4: Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools and Local Educational Agencies**

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which the State in which it is located uses best practices from charter schools to help improve struggling schools and local educational agencies.

Strengths:

One of the strengths of the application's discussion of best practice sharing, is the consistency and history of the State activities in curating and disseminating best practices throughout the State's K12 system. As noted on page e27, with the assistance of the 2010 Federal CSP grant, the state has conducted these activities for the past eight years. The best practices were evaluated via onsite visits and student performance data for effectiveness and ultimately evaluated by the Department (e27).

Another strength in best practice sharing is found in the annual 'Best Practices' conference (e28).

According to the application, the conference offers a breadth of sessions for attendees and removes barriers to access by allowing those who cannot attend the conference to access session materials. Additionally, surveys seek to understand how the schools have implemented the best practices into their programs (e27).

The applicant also notes that approximately 250 charter educators attended the Best Practices conference (e28), evidence of a strong representation of the State's 28 operating charter schools.

Finally, the State has embedded best practice sharing into its charter application process. As noted in the Section 11: Communication Plan, found at the bottom of page e114, charter applicants are asked to document "a plan to develop and disseminate best practices to charter schools, LEAs and the wider community."

Weaknesses:

Though the history of collection and dissemination of best practices appears to exist within the NH charter movement, the efforts noted in the application to apply these best practices quite specifically to struggling schools or to share them with LEA is not evident (e27-29).

The application notes that the best practices were disseminated to all NH K12 schools (e27), but does not show evidence of the State actually using the best practices found in charter schools to improve struggling schools or LEAs. Though comprehensive and relatively barrier free, the annual conference is not a requirement for struggling schools. Struggling schools are merely 'encouraged to attend' (e28).

Evidence is offered that highlights a comprehensive plan to assist both charter school and traditional schools that are struggling, detailing targeted and comprehensive support (e28) as well as professional development and technical assistance (e29), but this appears to be unrelated to the request found in Competitive Preference Priority 4.

Finally, the applicant highlights that the charter application (e114) and annual report and renewal process (e160-161) requires charter schools to provide details about their efforts to share best practices with the local LEA, but it is unclear if the sharing of best practices is tracked or measured to understand its use or if the best practices are used to assist the local LEA.

Unfortunately, there is no evidence that the activities mentioned in paragraph 2, page e28 through paragraph 2 on page e29 specifically use best practices from charter schools to assist struggling schools.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 5 - Serving At-Risk Students

1. Competitive Preference Priority 5: Serving At-Risk Students

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which it supports charter schools that serve at-risk students through activities such as dropout prevention, dropout recovery, or comprehensive career counseling services

Strengths:

The applicant highlights that two of the state's educational goals are to assure a quality education for every child and to help close the achievement gap for educationally disadvantaged students (e30).

The applicant provides additional startup funds for charter schools that locate within attendance zones of schools which have been identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) or Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) or in areas with low performing subgroups and graduation rates (e30).

Offered as evidence, and in support of those goals, is the state's history of authorizing charter schools that serve higher percentages of at-risk students (e30, e32-33), and the scoring advantage it will give to CSP subgrantees that target educationally disadvantaged students.

The applicant cites the state's support of serving at-risk students by noting the state's requirement of locally developed policies to ensure multiple pathways toward course credits including extended learning opportunities and distance education (e35-36). Additional supports of professional development and coaching are offered through Next Steps NH which helps high schools increase graduation rates for at-risk students using evidence-informed practices (e36).

Additionally, as part of the new grant activities, the state will cultivate charter school applicants with innovative approaches, such as those offering student designed or community-based learning opportunities (e32), to open secondary schools that target at-risk students and provide technical assistance and training for interested subgrantees (e72-73).

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority 6 - Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing**1. Competitive Preference Priority 6: Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing**

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which it has taken steps to ensure that all authorized public chartering agencies implement best practices for charter school authorizing.

Strengths:

Both SBE and LEA authorized charter schools provide an annual evaluation and needs assessment report to the Department and to their authorizer (e37-38 and e154-158) that reviews the following areas of school data: academic performance and growth data, graduation and retention rates, and school program data (e155). The applicant also highlights the evidence for transparency in accordance with (C)(2) on pages e37-38 and e154, as it cites that the State requires that all charter schools provide its accountability report and its audited financial report to the public on an annual basis (e37-38, e154).

Additionally noted as a strength is the authorizer monitoring of performance and program offerings. The applicant highlights additional authorizer activities that occur to ensure the charter schools are performing in areas of academics, finances and operations, including: program audits in year one and every three years (e37) and periodic on site monitoring conducted by a group of charter leaders, district and Department of Education staff (e38 and e145). Additionally, the state requires that charter schools meet or exceed the State academic standards (e54).

Finally, in alignment with the Assurances found in NIA Section (E)(3), the applicant provides strong evidence, of academic, operational, and financial quality controls that are anchored in the renewal, nonrenewal or revocation of the charter school (e37, e41-42, e116-154).

As detailed by the applicant, the review process is inclusive of a comprehensive onsite review and a review of a multiyear body of evidence (e42). The detailed renewal evaluation rubric is shaped by Administrative Rules for Renewal, also provided as evidence by the applicant (e159-161).

Weaknesses:

Though the state requirements for performance are clearly articulated, it is not clearly stated if the LEA authorizers use the same rigorous application and renewal process.

Reader's Score: 3

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