

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/26/2017 12:06 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Texas Education Agency (U282A170018)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection criteria		
Flexibility		
1. Flexibility	10	10
Sub Total	10	10
Selection Criteria		
Objectives		
1. Objectives	15	15
Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants		
1. Quality of Subgrant	15	14
State Plan		
1. State Plan	20	16
Parent and Community Involvement		
1. Involvement	10	6
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	15	13
Quality of the Management Plan, Theory of Action		
1. Management Plan	15	13
Sub Total	90	77
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
Periodic Review and Evaluation		
1. Review and Evaluation	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
Charter School Oversight		
1. Charter School Oversight	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process		
1. Authorizer other than LEA	2	2
Sub Total	2	2

Competitive Preference Priority 4

Equitable Financing

1. Equitable Financing	2	2
Sub Total	2	2

Competitive Preference Priority 5

Charter School Facilities

1. Charter School Facilities	2	2
Sub Total	2	2

Competitive Preference Priority 6

Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools/LEAs

1. Struggling Schools	2	1
Sub Total	2	1

Competitive Preference Priority 7

Serving At-Risk Students

1. Serving At-Risk Students	2	1
Sub Total	2	1

Competitive Preference Priority 8

Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing

1. Best Practices	5	4
Sub Total	5	4

Total	125	109
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Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Panel 1 - Texas - 1: 84.282A

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Texas Education Agency (U282A170018)

Questions

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 documents convincing evidence that the State's charter school affords flexibility to charter schools. Among the examples provided are the following:

- Texas Education Code, Chapter 12 outlines requirement and prohibitions applicable to charter schools, but latitude is given in the areas of school personnel and employment contracting, roles and responsibilities, service days, calendars and operating hours, class size and student/teacher ratio among other things (pg. 21);
- Waiver authority to given to the education commissioner when a charter school can make a compelling case to not be subject to an applicable requirement if it is a barrier to students' success at the school (pg. 22); and
- Amending charter school contracts is a power given to the education commissioner and streamlining for issues such as number of students and grade levels to be served, and campus sites is ensured statutorily such amendments must be resolved in 60 days.

Additionally, the applicant presents adequate evidence of efforts to maximize charter school flexibility through:

- Texas Education Agency (TEA) has published model district policy that maximizes the autonomy of district charter schools (pg. 23); and
- TEA requires information on autonomy for campus charters in determining districts eligibility for CSP grant funding (pg.23).

The applicant thoroughly validates efforts to maximize charter school flexibility under their state law for the school and efforts by the TEA.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses note.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Objectives

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

Strengths:

The applicant clearly identifies three, needs-based objectives for a CSP grant:

- The grant is intended to enable enrollment of an additional 35,000 students in 75 newly-replicable high-quality state charter school campuses. Although Texas Administrative Code qualifications for new schools prohibit schools from just being an extension of a pre-existing school, the CSP Grant to State Entities can be used to meet this objective as subgrants can be for replication and expansion, not just for "new schools" (pg. 25). There is high demand for charter schools as demonstrated by 111 additional campuses opening via charter amendments since December 2016 (pg. 26).

- The grant is intended to enable the enrollment of an additional 20,000 students in 40 newly-replicated high-quality district charter school campuses. Changes in Texas Education Code afford districts the ability to replicate a high-quality district charter school model across multiple campuses through leadership development (pg. 27). Texas Education Authority (TEA) plans to support leadership development through the Texas Authorizing Leadership Academy (TALA) and with technical assistance from TEA's System of Great Schools Network (pg. 28).
- The grant is intended to enable 30 vanguard districts to become effective authorizers of high-quality charter schools in accordance with nationally recognized standards; prepare leaders of 120 school districts to introduce authorizing principles and lessons from vanguard districts in their communities. TALA will be the mechanism for both in-person training to 10-15 districts and online training to an additional 120 district leadership teams (pg. 29). These goals demonstrate ambitious objectives for the proposed project that are sound and feasible.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 15

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 fully responds to the expectation for identifying quality subgrant applicants through the lenses of both state charter school and district charter school applicants. Again, the ability to replicate existing models leads to the expectation of a large number of subgrant application which will lead to only the highest quality applicants to be awarded (pg. 30). State charter applicants must have met high academic, financial and operational standards as measured by already existing systems such as the State Accountability System and the Charter Financial Integrity Rating System (pg. 31). These measurement strategies will also be used for district charter school applicants with the addition of demonstrating best practice in charter authorizing (pg. 32). It is reasonable to conclude that applicants from both sectors will meet the programs first two objectives and improve educational results for students. As noted, the district school applicants have the additional incentive of demonstrating its potential related to the program's third objective, quality authorizing leadership, through demonstration of current practices aligned to National Association of Charter School Authorizers (pg. 32).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide sufficient information regarding how charter management organizations (CMO) are determined to be high-quality operators.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - State Plan

1. The State entity's plan to--

- 1) Adequately monitor the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program;**
- 2) Work with the authorized public chartering agencies involved to avoid duplication of work for the charter schools and authorized public chartering agencies; and**
- 3) 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 efforts to monitor successful subgrant applicants through multiple measures such as risk-based, Performance ongoing standard routines, and monitoring reviews through Charter and District Integrity Rating Systems and Based Monitoring Analysis Systems (pg. 33-34) are germane to the project plan. These measures should be adequate to assure sufficient oversight of subgrants.

The applicant states that it will work with both state- and district-authorized charter schools in avoiding duplication of work. Tools such as the Charter School Performance Framework is an example of using already existing data to inform another purpose (pg. 34). Additionally, the applicant states it will collaborate and standardize its monitoring of district charter schools to minimize impact of additional requirements or work (pg. 35).

The applicant provides examples of multiple technical assistance efforts for subgrantees such as "The Network," a partnership of Educational Service Center Region 11 and Texas Charter Schools Association, that offers to support implementation of research-based continuous improvement, a staffed resource center, summer training (pg. 35).

Additionally, district charter schools receive technical assistance through the Texas Education Authority's Division of System Support & Innovation using the School Redesign Fund (pg. 36).

Plans for the Texas Authorizing Leadership Academy (TALA) will focus on quality authorizing efforts as discussed in other sections of the applicant as well as the System for Great Schools which will develop authorizer resources such as a handbook in addition to previous discussion of the programs (pg. 37).

The applicant displays strength in its state plan because it balances monitoring of subgrantees with technical assistance to ensure success.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not provide any examples of past efforts with state- and district-authorized charter schools in practices that minimized or eliminated duplication of effort.

Reader's Score: 16

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, in discussing parent and community involvement, appropriately notes that "state law requires a notice of intent" be communicated to all school districts and legislators in the region where the charter or additional charter is being proposed (pg. 37). Subgrantees for this project will also be required to discuss their methodology for determining needs and responsiveness in the proposed school plans (pg. 37). Additionally, "opportunities for public review and comments when setting standards for charter authorizing, operation, evaluation, expansion and replication, renewal, and revocation" are encouraged.

The applicant includes fitting information regarding that state charter school applicant requirement to solicit and provide evidence of community support for a proposed charter school based on community needs. The proposed work of the Texas Authorizing Leadership Academy and System of Great Schools (SGS) Network will include community engagement tool development with SGS Network participant coaching in helping parents and communities with school choice (pg. 38).

Weaknesses:

There are limited specific examples of how the applicant, beyond at the charter school level, solicits and considers input from parents and the community on the implementation and operation of charter schools. While interviewing state charter school applicants in a public hearing by State Board of Education and commissioner designees is in practice, the level of communication or means to participate by all interested parties, including parents, is not included. No information is provided regarding how the applicant considers input from parents and community members beyond requiring proposed charter schools to provide evidence of outreach and community need (pgs. 37-38).

Reader's Score: 6

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the State entity's charter school subgrant program, including the extent to which the project design furthers the State entity's overall strategy for increasing the number of high-quality charter schools in the State and improving student academic achievement. In determining the quality of the project design, the Secretary considers the quality of the State entity's process for awarding subgrants for planning, program design, and initial implementation including--

1) The subgrant application and peer review process, timelines for these processes, and how the State entity intends to ensure that subgrants will be awarded to eligible applicants demonstrating the capacity to create high-quality charter schools; and

2) A reasonable year-by-year estimate, with supporting evidence, of (i) the number of subgrants the State entity expects to award during the project period and the average size of those subgrants, including an explanation of any assumptions upon which the estimates are based; and (ii) if the State entity has previously received a CSP grant, the percentage of eligible applicants that were awarded subgrants and how this percentage related to the overall quality of the applicant pool.

Strengths:

The applicant does present reasonable timelines and review processes for the awarding of CSP subgrants sufficient to demonstrate a thoughtful approach to the grant award process. The aggressive timeline includes Texas Education Agency's internal initial application reviews will be completed prior to external reviews by five high-quality charter school experts scoring each applicant on subgrant criteria (pg. 39). The applicant presents a selection plan based on three criteria areas provided on pages 40-41: general review criteria which will be the major category of the application at 60% with standard review criteria and priority review criteria at 20% each and are reasonable for ensuring that applicants have the capacity to create high-quality charter schools. Year-by-year estimations for the number of state- and district-authorized charter school subgrants and award amounts are provided with sensible rationale for the number of anticipated subgrants (pg. 41-42). The project design encompasses all the state plan objectives, is complete in its presentation, and is focused on using the CSP grant for increasing the number of high-quality charter schools and improving student achievement.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does note the decline in subgrant award success in recent CSP application cycles (pg. 41) as a reason to anticipate more applications for replication or expansion. However, the applicant does not reflect on any possible barriers encountered by new model applicants in the previous application process that might also be encountered by replication or expansion model applicants during this application cycle. Noting changes to the CSP project design based on lessons learned for past grant award cycles would strengthen this section.

The applicant does not provide adequate information on qualifications of expert reviewers for the subgrant applications or how the reviewers will be vetted and selected for this project.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan, Theory of Action

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and the project's theory of action. In determining the quality of the management plan and the project's theory of action, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- 1) The quality, including the cohesiveness and strength of reasoning, of the "logic model" (as defined in this notice), and the extent to which it addresses the role of the grant in promoting the State-level strategy for using charter schools to improve educational outcomes for students through CSP subgrants for planning, program design, and initial implementation and other strategies;
- 2) The extent to which the State entity's project-specific performance measures, including any measures required by the Department, support the logic model; and
- 3) The adequacy of the management plan to--
 - i. Achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including the existence of clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks; and
 - ii. Address any compliance issues or findings related to the CSP that are identified in an audit or other monitoring review.

Strengths:

The applicant illustrates a straightforward vision for improving the educational outcomes for students through its logic model with output organized by the program's objectives (pg. 44-45). Inputs to the program come from comprehensive identification of stakeholders and activities provided in the logic model are discussed in the CSP application and are appropriately focused on the program objectives. The identified management team is well-qualified to lead the program (e91-e104). Furthermore, the Project Plan (pgs. 47-49 and Performance Measures (pgs. 50-55) fully explain the timelines, responsibilities and milestones for implementing the CSP. The Budget Summary (e6) demonstrates that 90% of the requested funding will be for subgrants.

Weaknesses:

One area of concern in reviewing this section is related to a Performance Target for charter schools serving at-risk students (pg. 51). It does not seem reasonable that, after the first year of grant implementation, based on the baseline of 45% of all state-authorized charter school receiving a rating of A or B on the state accountability framework domain III, the percentage will increase to 80%. The application would have been strengthened by including a more realistic performance measure.

Reader's Score: 13

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Periodic Review and Evaluation

1. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that the State provides for periodic review and evaluation by the authorized public chartering agency of each charter school at least once every five years, unless required more frequently by State law, and takes steps to ensure that such reviews take place. The review and evaluation must serve to determine whether the charter school is meeting the terms of the school's charter and meeting or exceeding the student academic achievement requirements and goals for charter schools as set forth in the school's charter or under State law, a State regulation, or a State policy, provided that the student academic achievement requirements and goals for charter schools established by that policy meet or exceed those set forth under applicable State law or State regulation. This periodic review and evaluation must include an opportunity for the authorized public chartering agency to take appropriate action or impose meaningful consequences on the charter school, if necessary.

Strengths:

The applicant clearly states that academic achievement is a primary element in the charter renewal process (pg. 1) and that an extensive evaluation is conducted after an initial five year contract including a wide scope of areas including variety of federal and state programs (pg. 3) before awarding 10-year renewals. The Texas Education Core requires

annual independent financial and programmatic operation audits of state charters. The Charter School Performance Framework was collaboratively developed to provide information on the “performance, viability, and sustainability” of charter schools (pg. 2). There are significant measures and consequences, including corrective actions and charter revocation, available to the commissioner of education for underperforming charter schools (pg. 3). Additionally, charter schools are subject to the state’s accountability system described on pages 4 and 5.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Charter School Oversight

1. To meet this priority, an application must demonstrate that State law, regulations, or other policies in the State where the applicant is located require the following:

a) That each charter school in the State--

- 1. Operates under a legally binding charter or performance contract between itself and the school's authorized public chartering agency that describes the rights and responsibilities of the school and the authorized public chartering agency;**
- 2. Conducts annual, timely, and independent audits of the school's financial statements that are filed with the school's authorized public chartering agency; and**
- 3. Demonstrates improved student academic achievement; and**

b) That all authorized public chartering agencies in the State use increases in student academic achievement for all groups of students described in section 1111(c)(2) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 6311(c)(2)) as one of the most important factors when determining whether to renew or revoke a school's charter.

Strengths:

The applicant documents that appropriate oversight of charter schools is provided in Texas legislation as there is a statutory requirement dictating revocation of a charter after three consecutive years of failure to meet academic performance and/or financial accountability standards by state charter schools (pg.7). The rights and responsibilities of both the charter school operator and the commissioner of education as authorizer of the state charter are outlined in the performance contract (pg. 7). A site visit protocol is utilized for records audits for charter compliance in addition to financial audits (pg. 8 and District-Authorized Charter School Site Visit Protocol is provided in Appendix) support evidence of administrative system strategies for charter schools. Rating of the charter’s financial performance using Charter Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (pg. 9) further demonstrates appropriate oversight.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process

1. To meet this priority, the applicant must demonstrate that the State--

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

Note: In order to meet this priority under paragraph (b) above, the entity hearing appeal must have the authority to approve the charter application over the objections of the LEA.

Strengths:

Texas Education Code appropriately provides for charters to be granted to higher education institutions, non-profit organization and governmental entities in addition to local educational agencies (pgs. 10-11). Granting of charters can be made by either entity and application can be made to the entities simultaneously. The applicant meets this Competitive Preference Priority as an LEA is not the only authorizing chartering agency.

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority 4 - Equitable Financing

- 1. 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:

Foundation School Program, based on weighted average daily attendance, is the principal funding mechanism for all Texas charter schools and accounts for student participation in special education, bilingual/ESL education and other education options (pg. 11). This is an advantageous strategy for ensuring equitable financing of charter schools. Adjustments made through FSP are intended to create equitable financial situations for charter schools who are not supported through local taxes. A notification system has been established to alert charter schools to grants and other discretionary funding (pg. 12) as a further mechanisms for equitable access to funding. A consolidated application is used for federally funded programs (pg. 12) for all school, including charter schools, is a tool in supporting equitable financing. The applicant meets the criteria of this Competitive Preference Priority with sound strategy and evidence.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority 5 - Charter School Facilities

- 1. 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:

The applicant provides notable examples of adequate facilities support efforts for charter schools in the state through programs such as the New Instructional Facilities Allotment providing reimbursement to charter schools in their first and second years of operation at the same terms as other LEAs, Texas Bond Guarantee Program providing bonds at the lowest possible interest rate, and the Charter School Finance Corporation providing "credit enhancement services enabling charter schools to secure low-interest rates for facilities financing" (pg. 14). Texas Education Code provides for charter schools being given first right to make an offer on property available to sale, lease or used by a district where charter school in the district's boundaries (pg. 15) as further evidence of support for charter schools. These multiple

measures demonstrate that the applicant fully meets the criteria for this Competitive Preference Priority.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority 6 - Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools/LEAs

- 1. 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**

Strengths:

Sound avenues to share best practices from charter schools to help improve struggling students and local educational agencies are available through efforts such as learning communities (Texas Gateway) and partnerships (SKY Partnership) noted on pgs. 15 and 16). The Texas Gateway is an online opportunity while the SKY Partnership is a cooperative performance contract between three educational organizations that includes sharing space as well as effective efforts and professional development. Additionally, Texas Education Authority (TEA) illuminates High Performing and High Progress Title I Reward Schools by disseminating case studies of these schools to all district and charter schools (pg. 15).

Weaknesses:

Details regarding other promising practices such as instructional leadership development involving partners that provide programming and technical assistance to charter schools, and the utilization of American Institutes for Research by Texas Education Authority for CSP grant evaluation and identification of promising practices are lacking (pg. 16). This Competitive Preference Priority could be enhanced with more specific information about the particulars of these identification and dissemination efforts to share best practices.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 7 - Serving At-Risk Students

- 1. 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:

Texas Education Code does include adequate evidence of legislative intentions to make provision for at-risk students through the creation of charter schools and open-enrollment charter schools located in a school district with unacceptable performance (pg. 16). The Performance-Based Monitoring Analysis System can generate information and data on specific performance indicators (pg. 17) that could be helpful in determining the levels of program support for at-risk students.

Weaknesses:

Specific examples of support for at-risks students beyond giving priority in CSP subgrants to charter serving students in who would otherwise attend a Title 1 Priority or Focus intervention schools are not provided. Inclusion of examples could fully validate the extent the applicant supports charter schools that serve at-risk students as this Competitive Preference Priority expects.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 8 - Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing

- 1. 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:

The applicant notes focused efforts to assure quality in charter schools authorizing through implementation of National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) Essential Practices by the Texas Education Authority (TEA). Specifically, an annual publication of charter school performance results disaggregated by authorizer and matched to comparison traditional schools is required by Texas Education Code. District charter school authorizing improvement efforts have been supported through creation of the Great Schools Network described on pg. 18). TEA also has developed resources documents and plans to develop training for district charter school authorizing based on NACSA's Principles.

Weaknesses:

Specific program goals and strategies for promoting quality charter school authorizing for the Texas Authorizers Leadership Academy (TALA) are lacking beyond noting that the program will be based on National Association of Charter School Authorizer's (NACSA) Principles, Standards, and Essential Practices (pg. 18). Inclusion of desired or planned program aspects would give additional substance to promotion of NACSA' Principles and enhance understanding of efforts to ensure all authorizing public chartering agencies implement best charter school authorizing practices.

Reader's Score: 4

Status: Submitted
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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Texas Education Agency (U282A170018)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection criteria		
Flexibility		
1. Flexibility	10	10
Sub Total	10	10
Selection Criteria		
Objectives		
1. Objectives	15	15
Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants		
1. Quality of Subgrant	15	14
State Plan		
1. State Plan	20	16
Parent and Community Involvement		
1. Involvement	10	6
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	15	13
Quality of the Management Plan, Theory of Action		
1. Management Plan	15	13
Sub Total	90	77
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
Periodic Review and Evaluation		
1. Review and Evaluation	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
Charter School Oversight		
1. Charter School Oversight	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process		
1. Authorizer other than LEA	2	2
Sub Total	2	2

Competitive Preference Priority 4

Equitable Financing

1. Equitable Financing	2	2
Sub Total	2	2

Competitive Preference Priority 5

Charter School Facilities

1. Charter School Facilities	2	2
Sub Total	2	2

Competitive Preference Priority 6

Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools/LEAs

1. Struggling Schools	2	1
Sub Total	2	1

Competitive Preference Priority 7

Serving At-Risk Students

1. Serving At-Risk Students	2	1
Sub Total	2	1

Competitive Preference Priority 8

Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing

1. Best Practices	5	5
Sub Total	5	5

Total	125	110
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Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Panel 1 - Texas - 1: 84.282A

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Texas Education Agency (U282A170018)

Questions

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 demonstrates a comprehensive degree of flexibility afforded by the State's charter school law and other practices by noting the following:

- The State's charter school statute specifically exempts state and district charter schools from state laws that ordinarily govern public schools, including certification with the exception of pre-kindergarten, special education and bilingual education) (pp. 20-21).
- The commissioner of education is given broad waiver authority (p.22).
- A Network is designed to support continuous improvement and to share opportunities which would maximize the advantages of the flexibility afforded charter schools.
- The commissioner is empowered to amend contracts when charters are seeking expansion (p.22).
- The TEA requires districts seeking CSP grant funding to submit information on the autonomy afforded to campus charters above and beyond the degree of flexibility afforded to traditional campuses with the district.

These measures are all designed to maximize the flexibility required under this selection criterion.

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Objectives

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

Strengths:

The applicant, a recipient of the a previous planning and implementation grant for new start-up charter schools, submits a well-developed sound case for further support to substantially enroll up to an additional 35,000 students in 75 newly-replicated high quality state charter school campuses, and additional 20,000 students in 40 newly-replicated district charter school campuses and, finally, enhance 30 school districts to become effective authorizers. While the objectives are ambitious, they are based on needs data showing that operators have sought approval to open an additional 111 school campuses and 28 operators have sought permission to grow enrollment, among other indicators of need (p26).

Other indicators that the objectives are sound and feasible are:

- In the past five years 115 state charter schools have sought expansion or replication amendments (p.26).
- The state statute provides for "on-charter, multiple campuses" (p.27).
- The commissioner can waive the 15% cap of the district's student populations, increasing the number of subgrant applicants considered allowing for broader replication (p.27).
- All of the above offers an opportunity to multiply the impact of a successful charter model (p.27).
- TEA is planning for an average of 12 districts to participate in the authorizing leadership academy (p.28) which is part of the project's ambitious objective to significantly improve and expand authorizing capacity
- As consistent with Priority 8, Objective III (authorizer capacity) will engage 10-15 districts annually in live, in-person training based on National Association Charter School Authorizer's Principals, Standards and Essential Practices.

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 15

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 provides a fully developed response for this criteria inclusive of the following details:

- The commissioner of education has adopted standards that ensure only high quality charter schools are approved to increase their enrollment, expand geographic boundaries, or add grade levels or new campuses.
- High performing CMO's have not met the growing demand for expansion and replication (p.30).
- The state's accountability ratings will be used to prioritize funding for expansion and replication (p31).
- The process will provide competitive preference points whose district charters operate in a strong authorizing context (p.32).

Weaknesses:

No data is provided to authenticate that the targeted CMO's and other charter operators are of high quality based on student achievement and other indicators (p.30).

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - State Plan

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

- 1) Adequately monitor the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program;**
- 2) Work with the authorized public chartering agencies involved to avoid duplication of work for the charter schools and authorized public chartering agencies; and**
- 3) 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 State plan to adequately monitor eligible sub-grant applicants is detailed in a two part approach:

- An existing Risk-based Monitoring System conforming to Federal Regulations which evaluates each sub-grant risk of noncompliance using multiple sources.
 - The Routine Monitoring used by the TEA which will use a performance dashboard to monitor progress toward grant objectives (p.33).
 - District charter applicants, additionally, will be required to provide information about the district context in order to assess the districts' past posture towards chartering
 - Avoiding duplication of efforts is noted with an emphasis on coordinating activities to minimize disruption (p.35).
- Quality authorization efforts are well addressed by the implementation of the Texas Authorizer Leadership Academy (TALA) and the System of Great Schools (pp.36-37)

Previously referenced technical assistance and support through the constellation of services provides sufficient organizational structures to support sub-grant applications. The services include Network staff providing direct onsite technical support, training for administrators, teachers and support for implementation of a research-based continuous improvement tool (Quality Framework) (p.35).

Weaknesses:

The multiple sources of determining sub-grant risk noncompliance needs further clarity and delineation. The absence of this information does not inform actual operational procedures to ensure a highly effective monitoring system. Similarly, the details of the dashboard components could have been further explained.

Reader's Score: 16

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:

Existing parent and community involvement requirements of charter applicants and procedures for authorizing and the administration of the state's charter school program are the main components cited in the application (pp.37-38). Proposals for the inclusion of parent and community involvement in model school district policies, the Authorizer Handbook and the Authorizer Performance Framework along with engagement tools in the Texas Authorizer Leadership Academy (TALA) and System of Great Schools (SGS) Network initiatives are helpful steps to achieve this selection criterion (pp.37-38).

Weaknesses:

There is no specific initiative offered to clearly demonstrate their plan to solicit and consider input from parents and other members of the community. For example, details are missing on how they would solicit information from parents and community members and how they would consider this input in decision making.

Reader's Score: 6

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the State entity's charter school subgrant program, including the extent to which the project design furthers the State entity's overall strategy for increasing the number of high-quality charter schools in the State and improving student academic achievement. In determining the quality of the project design, the Secretary considers the quality of the State entity's process for awarding subgrants for planning, program design, and initial implementation including--

- 1) The subgrant application and peer review process, timelines for these processes, and how the State entity intends to ensure that subgrants will be awarded to eligible applicants demonstrating the capacity to create high-quality charter schools; and
- 2) A reasonable year-by-year estimate, with supporting evidence, of (i) the number of subgrants the State entity expects to award during the project period and the average size of those subgrants, including an explanation of any assumptions upon which the estimates are based; and (ii) if the State entity has previously received a CSP grant, the percentage of eligible applicants that were awarded subgrants and how this percentage related to the overall quality of the applicant pool.

Strengths:

The applicant describes a comprehensive and detailed approach to ensure that only high-quality suburban applicants with a demonstrable track record of quality will receive funding for replication. This is accomplished through a three stage review process (p.40)utilizing highly qualified external reviewers, guided by review criteria that is well defined and systematically applied to the planned objectives and goals. The timeliness are reasonable and clearly indicated, with a year-by-year estimate of 25 subgrants awarded each year of the grant period to state charter schools for expansion and replication purposes (p.41) and 10 subgrants to district charter schools in the initial grant cycle (Project Year 1) and tehn 15 and 20 in each of the following two cycles respectively (p. 42) .the number of subgrants expected to be awarded.

As a recipient of a previous CSP grant the applicant is well positioned to estimate the percentage of eligible applicants to the overall quality of the applicant pool. A particular strength of the project design is a clear alignment with Objective III, whereby priority points are available to suburban applicants that demonstrate model authorizing standards and also target a high need population (p. 41)

Weaknesses:

The application describes the external reviewers as highly qualified but does not provide further definition details or describe how such individuals will be recruited.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan, Theory of Action

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and the project's theory of action. In determining the quality of the management plan and the project's theory of action, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- 1) The quality, including the cohesiveness and strength of reasoning, of the "logic model" (as defined in this notice), and the extent to which it addresses the role of the grant in promoting the State-level strategy for using

schools to improve educational outcomes for students through CSP subgrants for planning, program design, and initial implementation and other strategies;

2) The extent to which the State entity's project-specific performance measures, including any measures required by the Department, support the logic model; and

3) The adequacy of the management plan to--

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

ii. Address any compliance issues or findings related to the CSP that are identified in an audit or other monitoring review.

Strengths:

The management plan is well organized and aligned with application objectives and long term outcomes. The logic model addresses the role of the grant in promoting the planned strategy for expanding and replicating high quality charter schools to improve student performance outcomes and enhance authorizer capacity. Each objective is supported by strategic performance measures.

The timelines, budget, defined responsibilities, and milestones for accomplishing the project tasks are well articulated and coordinated.

No compliance issues or findings related to CSP were recorded in the application .are identified in an audit or other monitoring review.

Weaknesses:

The applicant performance measure for at risk student achievement (p. 51) sets a target of 80 percent improvement which is an unrealistic objective.

Reader's Score: 13

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Periodic Review and Evaluation

- 1. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that the State provides for periodic review and evaluation by the authorized public chartering agency of each charter school at least once every five years, unless required more frequently by State law, and takes steps to ensure that such reviews take place. The review and evaluation must serve to determine whether the charter school is meeting the terms of the school's charter and meeting or exceeding the student academic achievement requirements and goals for charter schools as set forth in the school's charter or under State law, a State regulation, or a State policy, provided that the student academic achievement requirements and goals for charter schools established by that policy meet or exceed those set forth under applicable State law or State regulation. This periodic review and evaluation must include an opportunity for the authorized public chartering agency to take appropriate action or impose meaningful consequences on the charter school, if necessary.**

Strengths:

The applicant delineates comprehensive details for the periodic annual review, evaluation, and if necessary, interventions and corrective actions, for both "state-authorized charter schools" (p.1) and "district charters" (p.3). It is asserted that "charter schools that receive only the highest performance ratings in the state accountability system (and have no financial or operational performance issues) are eligible for an expedited renewal and expansion processes (p.1).

The applicant cites the "Charter School Performance Framework", developed with the cooperation of the national

Association of Charter School Authorizers, as an example of how the Texas Education Agency (TEA) is adequately informed of charter school performance (p.2). Further, the state's accountability system is based on a framework of four indexes that document annual student achievement, progress, closing performance relative to disadvantaged and lowest performing racial/ethnic groups and postsecondary readiness (p.5).

Additionally, the TEA maintains an Accreditation system which examines the financial and academic health of all public schools, inclusive of charters, using indexes of program effectiveness, program compliance and data integrity (p.5). "Repeated" failure to meet any of these standards can lead to Not accredited –Revoked status and termination to operate as a public school (p.6).

Weaknesses:

Clarity can be improved when discussing the consequences of non-compliance (p.2), or, for example failure to satisfactorily meet the State accountability ratings based on the framework of four indexes. The applicant states that "the commissioner of education has authority to require corrective action to improve performance at either a state or district charter school in the event that state academic performance standards are not met", but does not go further to describe such corrective actions

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Charter School Oversight

1. To meet this priority, an application must demonstrate that State law, regulations, or other policies in the State where the applicant is located require the following:

a) That each charter school in the State--

- 1. Operates under a legally binding charter or performance contract between itself and the school's authorized public chartering agency that describes the rights and responsibilities of the school and the authorized public chartering agency;**
- 2. Conducts annual, timely, and independent audits of the school's financial statements that are filed with the school's authorized public chartering agency; and**
- 3. Demonstrates improved student academic achievement; and**

b) That all authorized public chartering agencies in the State use increases in student academic achievement for all groups of students described in section 1111(c)(2) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 6311(c)(2)) as one of the most important factors when determining whether to renew or revoke a school's charter.

Strengths:

Charter School oversight is adequately described in the form of the detailed charter school contracts for both state and district charters as proscribed by the state's charter school law and regulations. For example, "the state prioritizes academic performance, requiring the commissioner of education to revoke a charter if the charter school fails to meet academic performance (and/or financial accountability standards) for three consecutive years" (p.7).

Annual financial audits are filed with the school's authorizer and are further evaluated via a state financial accountability ratings system which analyzes financial data from the previous fiscal year (p.10).

Weaknesses:

It is not clear how the state uses student performance achievement for all groups of students as a critical factor in determining whether to renew or revoke a school's charter. For example, while the application states that it "prioritizes" academic performance in such decisions, it does not adequately explain, through benchmarks or other indices the degree

of improved academic performance is expected for charters based on their contract obligations (p. 1) or examines how different student groups are performing academically (p.2)..

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process

1. To meet this priority, the applicant must demonstrate that the State--

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

Note: In order to meet this priority under paragraph (b) above, the entity hearing appeal must have the authority to approve the charter application over the objections of the LEA.

Strengths:

Two categories of charter authorizers are detailed: the commissioner of education has the authority to grant a charter to an institution of higher education (private or public); a non-profit organization; or a governmental entity, and each local school district may grant a charter for one or more schools (p.10).

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority 4 - Equitable Financing

1. 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 a comprehensive description and analysis of equitable funding for both state and district authorized charter schools. For example, state law "evens out" local tax revenue support by supplementing funding based on weighted daily average attendance through a state-wide average district tax rate (p.11). In some cases state charters can earn a higher total allocation (p.12). A further enhancement ensuring equitable funding is the fact that charter schools receive transportation and other types operational funding on the same bases as school districts (p.12). State Charters, as LEAs have full access to federal formula programs.

Additionally, the TEA maintains procedures and practices which ensure full access and distribution of the federal funded programs for district charter schools.

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority 5 - Charter School Facilities

1. 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:

Charter schools in Texas, as described in the applications, are substantially supported for facilities funding, assistance with facilities acquisition, and access to public facilities, have access to bond financing and have the right of first refusal to purchase public school buildings. For example, the state established a New Instructional Facility Allotment (NIFA) as a reimbursement program, providing a per student allotment on the same bases as school districts, to support facilities costs in the first and second years of operation (p.14). The state legislature has enabled charter schools to participate in a bond guarantee program which gives charter schools bonds the equivalent of an AAA rating (p.14).

Additionally, the state has a Charter School Finance Corporation (CSFC) that provides credit enhancement services for charter schools to secure facilities financing at lower interest rates (p.14). District charter schools are also provided with facilities as part of the terms of the performance contract between the district and school operator (p.15).

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority 6 - Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools/LEAs

1. 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

Strengths:

The applicant cites a number of initiatives to disseminate best practices in addition to the TEA's online learning community. Germane to this preference priority is the SKY Partnership which is based on a performance contract between a school district and KIPP ad YES charter schools (p. 16). Other initiatives include TEA spotlights on High

performing and High Progress Title 1 Reward Schools and the recently implemented instructional leadership program.

Weaknesses:

The best practices noted by the applicant indicate ongoing and planned initiatives, but there was no evidences provided to demonstrate that these practices have data to show how they are improving struggling charter or district schools.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 7 - Serving At-Risk Students

- 1. 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 state gives priority for the establishment of open-enrollment charter schools in attendance zones of low performing district schools (p.16). The sub-grant scoring also provides for priority points for charters that serve students on schools that require interventions (p.17).

Weaknesses:

While the applicant offers state incentives to support the authorization of new charters located in locations that would normally serve at-risk students. There was no mention of how these efforts have demonstrated effectiveness with dropout prevention, dropout recovery, or comprehensive career counseling services.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 8 - Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing

- 1. 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:

The TEA has implemented all 12 of the NASCA Essential Authorizing Practices, including an annual publication of performance results of charter schools disaggregated by authorizing entity and compared to match traditional schools (p. 17). The TEA also provides ongoing technical assistance for the purpose of continuous improvement in authorizing (p.18). Districts in particular are coached by executive advisors over a 24 month period on high-quality authorizing practices. These steps and others outline in the application show a strong commitment to design and implement best practices in charter school authorizing.

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/26/2017 12:06 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/26/2017 12:06 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Texas Education Agency (U282A170018)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection criteria		
Flexibility		
1. Flexibility	10	10
Sub Total	10	10
Selection Criteria		
Objectives		
1. Objectives	15	15
Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants		
1. Quality of Subgrant	15	14
State Plan		
1. State Plan	20	17
Parent and Community Involvement		
1. Involvement	10	7
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	15	13
Quality of the Management Plan, Theory of Action		
1. Management Plan	15	13
Sub Total	90	79
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
Periodic Review and Evaluation		
1. Review and Evaluation	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
Charter School Oversight		
1. Charter School Oversight	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process		
1. Authorizer other than LEA	2	2
Sub Total	2	2

Competitive Preference Priority 4

Equitable Financing

1. Equitable Financing	2	2
Sub Total	2	2

Competitive Preference Priority 5

Charter School Facilities

1. Charter School Facilities	2	2
Sub Total	2	2

Competitive Preference Priority 6

Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools/LEAs

1. Struggling Schools	2	1
Sub Total	2	1

Competitive Preference Priority 7

Serving At-Risk Students

1. Serving At-Risk Students	2	1
Sub Total	2	1

Competitive Preference Priority 8

Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing

1. Best Practices	5	5
Sub Total	5	5

Total	125	112
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Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Panel 1 - Texas - 1: 84.282A

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Texas Education Agency (U282A170018)

Questions

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 provides comprehensive documentation regarding the degree of flexibility afforded by Texas charter school law. State laws that ordinarily govern public schools do not apply to either State or District charter schools (TEC 12.103(b) and TEC 12.055; page e46). Neither State nor District charter schools are required to comply with statutory requirements relating to school personnel (TEC 12.104 and 12.056; page e46). Texas Educational Agency maximizes this flexibility. The TEA, as the State authorizer, is given broad waiver authority if the charter operator makes a persuasive case that the applicable requirement or prohibition is a barrier to the success of students at the school, and is not among the fundamental provisions excepted from the waiver authority (TEC 7.056; page e47). The TEA has created an avenue for charter schools with a track record of strong performance with multiple campuses to permit early expansion provided that all other criteria are met (19 TAC 100.1033(9)A; page e48). TEA also requires districts to submit information on the autonomy afforded to District charters and how this autonomy is above and beyond the degree of flexibility and autonomy afforded to traditional campuses within the district (page e48).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Objectives

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

Strengths:

The applicant clearly articulates three objectives. These objectives support replicating high-quality state-authorized charter schools, enabling additional students to be served by expanding or replicating district-authorized charter schools, and enabling high performing districts to become effective authorizers of high-quality charter schools (page e49). These objectives are both ambitious and feasible. The applicant has provided realistic data and projections surrounding all of the objectives, demonstrating a high level of demand for the expansion and replication capacity that can continue through the grant period (page e51). TEC 12.0522 allows for a "one-charter, multiple campuses" paradigm for District charter schools which has only previously been available to State charter schools. Districts may now maximize the impact of high-quality district charter models by authorizing a successful school leader to replicate a model across multiple campuses (page e52). TEA is developing a range of supports to enable Texas school districts to become excellent authorizers through planned technical assistance (page e54).

Weaknesses:

No Weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 15

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 provides convincing language related to the likelihood that eligible applicants receiving sub-grants will meet stated objectives. Data is provided and is clearly linked to each objective. As stated by the applicant, "high-performing CMOs have not been able to meet the growing demand in Texas communities for access to the types of schools for which these CMOs are known. This pent-up demand is expected to generate high numbers of applications for the replication and expansion funding available through the new CSP State Entity grant" (page e55). The selection process prioritizes district and state charter schools with the strongest records of student achievement as measured by state accountability ratings. For example, the process will limit eligibility for replication to campuses rated as an A or B according to the state accountability system (page e56-57).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not include subgroup data to demonstrate how eligible applicants receiving sub-grants will be able to improve educational results for these groups of students.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - State Plan

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

- 1) Adequately monitor the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program;**
- 2) Work with the authorized public chartering agencies involved to avoid duplication of work for the charter schools and authorized public chartering agencies; and**
- 3) 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 sufficiently covers how their plan addresses monitoring eligible applicants receiving sub-grants. For example, their Risk-Based Monitoring System and Routine Monitoring process provides an ongoing view of sub-grantee effective use of grant funds for intended purposes (page e58-59). Evidence is provided that demonstrates coordination with both charter schools and authorized chartering agencies to avoid duplication of work. For example, TEA gathers information necessary for charter-specific monitoring purposes from the standard collections required of all LEAs through the Texas State Data System (page e59), TEA will also collaborate with districts to unify requirements so that information the district requires for monitoring purposes in its role as charter authorizer is standardized and collected using the same reporting tool. In addition, TEA will work with district authorizers to coordinate any CSP-related monitoring visits with the district's monitoring activities to minimize disruption (page e60). The applicant provides comprehensive plans for providing technical assistance and support to both eligible applicants receiving sub-grants and to supporting quality authorizing efforts. For example, TEA will continue to provide proven state charter school technical assistance through The Network (partnership between ESC Region 11 and TCSA) and The Network sponsors a charter school Summer Summit which is a

multi-day training with many applicable breakout sessions (page e60). TEA plans on establishing targeted District Charter School technical assistance by matching expansion and replication support with individual applicant needs based on application quality and subsequent performance (page e61).

Weaknesses:

Multiple sources of determining sub-grant noncompliance needs further clarity and delineation. The absence of this information does not inform operational procedures. Details of dashboard components could be further explained. Previous efforts could have been provided on how the network resource center and materials will be widely disseminated.

Reader's Score: 17

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 satisfactorily addressed the plan for soliciting input from parent as well as from other members of the community on the implementation and operation of charter schools in the State. Sub-grantee applicants for CSP funding must report findings from community outreach and the methodology used to determine the needs and responsiveness of the proposed school plans. Opportunities have been provided for public review and comment when setting standards for charter authoring, operation, evaluation, expansion and replication, renewal, and revocation (page e62). In addition, charter school enabling legislation has empowered coalitions of parents and teachers to create and manage the schools they desire using local chartering mechanisms through district-authorized charter schools. The model district charter policies, the Authorizer Handbook, and the Authorizer Performance Framework that will be produced with CSP grant funds are further examples of current and/or planned venues used to inform and solicit feedback from parents and community members (page e63).

Weaknesses:

There are only limited specific examples related to how parents are invited to participate in providing input by the state entity. The applicant does not address how they would consider the input solicited from parents and community members.

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the State entity's charter school subgrant program, including the extent to which the project design furthers the State entity's overall strategy for increasing the number of high-quality charter schools in the State and improving student academic achievement. In determining the quality of the project design, the Secretary considers the quality of the State entity's process for awarding subgrants for planning, program design, and initial implementation including--

- 1) The subgrant application and peer review process, timelines for these processes, and how the State entity intends to ensure that subgrants will be awarded to eligible applicants demonstrating the capacity to create high-quality charter schools; and
- 2) A reasonable year-by-year estimate, with supporting evidence, of (i) the number of subgrants the State entity expects to award during the project period and the average size of those subgrants, including an explanation of any assumptions upon which the estimates are based; and (ii) if the State entity has previously received a CSP grant, the percentage of eligible applicants that were awarded subgrants and how this percentage related to the overall quality of the applicant pool.

Strengths:

The applicant presents a thorough process for awarding sub-grants and the overall strategy will have a high likelihood of increasing the number of high-quality charter schools as well as improving student academic achievement. The competitive application process ensures that ONLY high-quality applicants with a demonstrable track-record of quality will receive funding for replication (page e63). The external review committee will be composed of nationally recognized developers of high-quality schools and the grants scored independently by five expert reviewers (page e64). Applicants will be selected for award based primarily on capacity for increasing the number of students it serves in high-quality schools, its probable impact on the number of students served in low-performing schools, and the cohesiveness of its expansion or replication plan (page 65). The applicant adequately explains how the reasonable estimate number of applicants per grant year is determined, based on the number of quality applicants and awards in the CSP start-up grant competition in prior years (page e66). The project design is clear and aligned with the State plan and objectives. The Division of Charter School Administration (CSA) and the Division of System Support and Innovation (DSSI) will collaborate to project manage the CSP grants and initiatives. This should maximize staff resources and knowledge sharing (page e71).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide a rationale concerning the anticipated average award amount given (page e67). On page e65, the applicant states that "a set of highly qualified external reviewers will review every application." Further definition and details are missing on how these peer reviewers are recruited and what criteria will be used to be sure they are "highly qualified." On page e66, the applicant states that "most recently the number of applicants has risen while the rate of success has declined." The application provides no information related to what barriers may exist that has led to a lower rate of success for charter school start-ups; and the subsequent decision to limit funds to replication sub-grants.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan, Theory of Action

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and the project's theory of action. In determining the quality of the management plan and the project's theory of action, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- 1) The quality, including the cohesiveness and strength of reasoning, of the "logic model" (as defined in this notice), and the extent to which it addresses the role of the grant in promoting the State-level strategy for using charter schools to improve educational outcomes for students through CSP subgrants for planning, program design, and initial implementation and other strategies;**
- 2) The extent to which the State entity's project-specific performance measures, including any measures required by the Department, support the logic model; and**
- 3) The adequacy of the management plan to--**
 - i. Achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including the existence of clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks; and**
 - ii. Address any compliance issues or findings related to the CSP that are identified in an audit or other monitoring review.**

Strengths:

The applicant includes a logic model that sufficiently addresses the role of the grant in promoting the State-level strategy for using charter schools to improve educational outcomes for students. The stated long-term desired outcomes relate to increasing the number and percent of students in A or B rated schools, decreasing the number and percent of students in low-performing schools, and creating a cadre of effective district charter authorizers to drive accountability and continuous improvement. Each objective is supported by strategic performance measures, with a justified alignment (page e69-e70). Timelines and budget, defined responsibilities, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks are clearly defined in the chart on page e70.

Weaknesses:

The applicant Performance Measure of "the % of sub-grantees receiving a rating of A/B on state accountability framework domain III (At-risk student performance)" moving from the baseline of 45% of all state-authorized charter schools receiving

a rating of A or B to at least 80% after one year is unrealistic (page e76).

Reader's Score: 13

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Periodic Review and Evaluation

- 1. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that the State provides for periodic review and evaluation by the authorized public chartering agency of each charter school at least once every five years, unless required more frequently by State law, and takes steps to ensure that such reviews take place. The review and evaluation must serve to determine whether the charter school is meeting the terms of the school's charter and meeting or exceeding the student academic achievement requirements and goals for charter schools as set forth in the school's charter or under State law, a State regulation, or a State policy, provided that the student academic achievement requirements and goals for charter schools established by that policy meet or exceed those set forth under applicable State law or State regulation. This periodic review and evaluation must include an opportunity for the authorized public chartering agency to take appropriate action or impose meaningful consequences on the charter school, if necessary.**

Strengths:

The applicant clearly and thoroughly documents that by law annual audit and performance reviews and evaluations take place for all Texas state and district charter schools using State and Federal accountability requirements. These reviews focus on academic achievement as the prime indicator in charter school performance and subsequent renewal; and this annual review can lead to performance interventions which would impose corrective action required by the State Education Agency or other charter authorizers. Required financial and programmatic operations are also audited annually. (Texas Education Code (TEC) 12.111(a); 12.1141 and 19; 100.1033(b)(10); 12.111(a)(11); page e26). Taking steps to ensure the reviews take place is evidenced by state law requiring every school, traditional or charter, adopt a performance framework based on national best practices and each charter school is evaluated annually under the terms of the applicable framework (TEC 12.1181); page e27). The Charter School Performance Framework (CSPF) is used for the annual evaluation, including revealing any violations of the terms of a charter school's contract, and all authorizers can require corrective actions, place the charter school on probationary status or initiate charter revocation proceedings (TEC 12.1141; 12.115; page e27).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Charter School Oversight

- 1. To meet this priority, an application must demonstrate that State law, regulations, or other policies in the State where the applicant is located require the following:**
 - a) That each charter school in the State--**
 - 1. Operates under a legally binding charter or performance contract between itself and the school's authorized public chartering agency that describes the rights and responsibilities of the school and the authorized public chartering agency;**
 - 2. Conducts annual, timely, and independent audits of the school's financial statements that are filed with the school's authorized public chartering agency; and**
 - 3. Demonstrates improved student academic achievement; and**
 - b) That all authorized public chartering agencies in the State use increases in student academic achievement for all groups of students described in section 1111(c)(2) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 6311(c)(2)) as one of the most important factors when determining whether to renew or revoke a school's charter.**

Strengths:

The applicant specifies that State law requires charters authorized by an independent school district take the form of a performance contract and that renewal of the charter is contingent on satisfactory student performance, satisfactory financial performance, and compliance with any other applicable accountability provisions (TEC 12.0531; 12.059). A district is required by law to terminate the charter of a district charter school if the school fails to meet state academic performance standards for three consecutive years (TEC 39.107(e); page e29). The applicant addresses the evaluation of academic achievement performance for groups of students through Index 3, "Closing Performance Gaps." Charter schools that receive one of the highest performance ratings in the state accountability system (and have no financial or operational compliance issues) are eligible for an expedited renewal process (TEC 12.1141). The applicant fully delineates the performance contract requirements governing the charter school and authorizing agent which specify the rights and responsibilities of each party (TEC 12.111; page e32-33). State law requires that all LEAs, including charters, annually submit an audit by an independent certified or public accountant to Texas Education Agency. For district authorized charter schools, the authorizing board of trustees must adopt procedures by which it will place a charter school on probation or revoke its charter if the school does not meet academic performance criteria or commits other material violation of its charter contract. The applicant clearly states that both State and District charter authorizers are required to conduct annual performance reviews (with increases in all student achievement as priority); and as a result of the review provide tiered interventions. If either State or District charter schools fail to meet academic performance standards for three of the preceding five years, the charter must be revoked under state law (page e34).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process**1. To meet this priority, the applicant must demonstrate that the State--**

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

Note: In order to meet this priority under paragraph (b) above, the entity hearing appeal must have the authority to approve the charter application over the objections of the LEA.

Strengths:

The applicant clearly explains that the state provides for one authorized public chartering agency that is not an LEA. The commissioner of education for the Texas Educational Agency may grant a charter to an institution of higher education (public or private); a non-profit organization; or a governmental entity, and multiple campuses may operate under one charter (TEC 12.101(a); page e35). In addition, an LEA may grant a charter for the operation of one or more schools. Developers may apply for a state charter without having to exhaust opportunities at the local district level first.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority 4 - Equitable Financing

1. **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 clearly demonstrates that the State ensures equitable financing, as compared to traditional public schools, in a prompt manner. This applies to both district and state charter schools. State charter schools may receive funding generated through daily attendance, formula grants, and discretionary allocations via competitive grant programs (TEC 12.106; page e36). District charter schools generate state funding on the same basis as traditional schools within a district. Because State charter schools do not, like districts, collect local taxes, State law "evens out" the funding by supplementing the Weighted Average Daily Attendance (WADA) allocation with an additional amount based on a State-wide average district tax rate and a Statewide average of adjustments districts receive based on characteristics such as population sparsity and the cost of education in the geography they serve (TEC 12.106; page e36).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority 5 - Charter School Facilities

1. **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:

The applicant provides adequate information demonstrating the extent to which the State provides charter school with a right of first refusal to purchase or lease public school buildings (TEC 11.1542; page e40). State charter schools are eligible for facility-cost reimbursement on the same terms as traditional school districts and enables State charter schools to participate in the Texas Bond Guarantee Program. In addition, the State legislature created the Charter School Finance Corporation (CSFC) which serves as a state-supported bond issuer enabling charter schools to secure facilities financing at lower interest rates (page e39).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority 6 - Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools/LEAs

1. **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**

Strengths:

The applicant adequately describes various ways that all Texas LEAs are encourage to disseminate promising practices statewide such as Texas Gateway (online learning community), partnerships with charter schools, and Instructional Leadership Initiative (ILA) (page e40-41).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide specific evidence that the State uses best practices from charter schools to provide targeted assistance to help improve struggling schools. The support mentioned is general in nature and not specifically targeted to assist struggling schools.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 7 - Serving At-Risk Students

- 1. 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 clearly documents that the State gives priority to the creation of charter schools dedicated to serving students at risk of dropping out of school (TEC 12.101(b-7); page e41). In addition, Texas law "gives priority to applications that propose an open-enrollment charter school campus to be located in the attendance zone of a school district campus assigned an unacceptable performance rating under TEC 39.054 for the two preceding school years" (TEC 12.110(e); page e41-42). The staff using the automated Performance-Based Monitoring Analysis System (PBMAS) supports intervention activities using a continuous improvement model and charter schools may also be subject to additional sanctions and interventions, including on-site reviews (page e42).

Weaknesses:

The applicant has not provided specific examples of what kinds of support has been and will be provided to serve at-risk students.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 8 - Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing

- 1. 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:

The applicant provides sufficient evidence demonstrating the appropriate steps taken to ensure that all authorized public chartering agencies implement best practices for charter school authorizing. The National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) indicates that TEA has implemented all 12 of the NACSA Essential Authorizing Practices. There is an annual publication of the performance results of charter schools disaggregated by authorizing entity and compared to matched traditional schools which enables the public to distinguish the performance of schools across authorizers (TEC 12.1013; Page e42). TEA has also launched a new technical assistance network (System of Great Schools) which includes a focus on district authorizing practices. TEA has also developed resource documents, including a model district

authorizing policy. Districts applying for CSP grant funds on behalf of district charter schools they've authorized submit their authorizing practices and procedures for TEA review. TEA has hired a position to oversee all charter applications, including campus charters (page e45).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted

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