

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/29/2017 05:32 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY SCHOOLS FOUNDATION, INC., THE (U282M170032)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Eligible Applicant		
1. Quality of Applicant	45	40
Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students		
1. Disadvantaged Students	25	19
Quality of the Evaluation Plan		
1. Evaluation Plan	10	8
Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel		
1. Management Plan/Personnel	20	14
Sub Total	100	81
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Promoting Diversity		
1. CPP 1	3	0
School Improvement through Turnaround Efforts		
1. CPP 2	5	0
Sub Total	8	0
Total	108	81

Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - Charter Management Organization - 4: 84.282M

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY SCHOOLS FOUNDATION, INC., THE (U282M170032)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Eligible Applicant

1. Comments should support your recommendation according to the Selection Criteria. Please address each section and provide your scores for each section separately.

Reader's Score: 40

Sub Question

1. The degree to which the applicant has demonstrated success in increasing academic achievement, including graduation rates where applicable, for all students and for each of the subgroups of students described in section 1111(c)(2) of the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA, attending the charter schools the applicant operates or manages.

Strengths:

Reading scores provided demonstrate higher than district and state averages in Reading for grades level 3-5. In each of the years reported (2011, 2012, 2013). Student achievement in math is also higher when compared to State and District percentages for the same 3 year period The percentage of proficient/advanced grades 305 Reading MSA results for 2011, 2012, 2013 is evidence that NACA elementary schools had surpassed State and District levels in 2011 and 2012. Math MSA scores for the same time frame and same grades were slightly higher than State and District results in 2011. Middle school results for reading surpassed district and State African American and White students in 2012. In 2011 NACA out-scored District and State subgroups (Chart 7, p. 15). There is some indication that the achievement gap may gradually be closing for Black African American students in Math and Reading grades 3-5 (Charts 5, 6 p. 14) and grades 6-8 (Charts 7, 8 p. 15-16).

Weaknesses:

While the applicant has noted the contributing factors for the decline in reading and math scores between 2011 and 2013 the applicant states that those problems are 'unavoidable' due to decreases in budget allocations requiring them to modify their original vision of "one instructional Aide as teacher-in-training per classroom". While this affects student-teacher ratio there is no indication as to how the strength of instruction was compromised resulting in the declines in achievement (p. 12) in programming they made to insure that instruction was not compromised. No data is provided for 2014, 2015 school years.

Declines in percentages for reading are reported between 2012 and 2013. Math scores were below State for the White FARM subgroup in 2012 and in 2011 continued to decline in Math. Middle school scores in 2013 declined and comparisons for both District and State White sub-groups were higher than for the NACA students. While the author states achievement data is "encouraging yet signal room for growth" there is no evidence of a plan for that growth (p.150.)

Middle School Math scores are significantly lower than NACA reading scores and surpassed only District African American subgroup over the 3 years reported.

There is no data reported for 2014 and 2015 (Chart 8, p. 16).

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 12

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

Strengths:

Average daily attendance rated for educationally disadvantaged students attending NACA elementary schools has remained high (97-98%) over the past five years when compared to the City and State averages (93% and 94% respectively) (p. 17). Middle school attendance rates are also higher than District and State rates.

Suspension rates for educationally disadvantaged students are impressive (less than 1%) and considerably lower than district (8.9%) and State (8%) averages. Secondary school suspension rates are higher than elementary school but still below the district and state averages (p.17). NACA adopted a restorative justice disciplinary model to address the higher rates in secondary school (p.e 96).

Promotion rates are provided for all students and subgroups including educationally disadvantaged students being promoted to the next grade and are higher in all years reported than the District or State promotion rates (p. 18, 19). NACA students outperformed their peers in both reading and math for the years 2011-2013. Reported reading and math proficiency scores Grades 3-5 as measured by percentages

Weaknesses:

High school attendance rates are a full percentage point below the state average. There is no indication as to a plan for improving high school attendance. While it is recognized that suspension rates for the secondary school need to improve there is no data or to suggest that the restorative justice model has proven successful in reducing behavior resulting in suspension. A description of how the restorative model is being used would strengthen this application. Achievement in math at the middle school level for African American and White subgroups is reported as falling below the state for the three years reported (p. e22). There is no data provided beyond the 2013 school year.

Reader's Score: 13

3. **The extent to which charter schools operated or managed by the applicant have not been closed; have not had a charter revoked due to noncompliance with statutory or regulatory requirements; have not had their affiliation with the applicant revoked or terminated, including through voluntary disaffiliation; have not had any significant issues in the area of financial or operational management; have not experienced significant problems with statutory or regulatory compliance that could lead to revocation of the school's charter; and have not had any significant issues with respect to student safety.**

Strengths:

There is a detailed closure plan included in the application. The applicant has stated that no such conditions that reflect non-compliance. "In the rare, yet to occur scenario that a NACA initiated and supported school does not meet standards, multiple steps are taken immediately to rectify the failures before closing the school". (pp e58-60)

Weaknesses:

There is no evidence of weakness in this application.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students

1. The significance of the contribution the proposed project will make in expanding educational opportunities for educationally disadvantaged students and enabling those students to meet challenging State academic standards. In determining the significance of the contribution the proposed project will make, the Secretary

Reader's Score: 19

Sub Question

1. The extent to which charter schools currently operated or managed by the applicant serve educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and English learners, at rates comparable to surrounding public schools; and

Strengths:

NACA schools serve primarily African American students and those in geographic areas that are politically and socially vulnerable. Charts included in the application show that the students served by NACA schools in Baltimore are consistent with the high rates of poverty characteristic of the Baltimore Public School System (Charts 1, 2, p. e14).

NACA serves a small percentage of special needs students in elementary school (9%) with higher rates in middle (18%) and high school (31%). These averages are explained by NACA's "commitment and ability to provide a college prep education to anyone who wants one" (p.30).

Weaknesses:

It is not clear why, given the stated strength in targeting students early to avoid identification the percentage of students with special needs increases significantly over the grade levels. It is unclear how these percentages compare to District and State averages.

Reader's Score: 7

2. The quality of the plan to ensure that the charter schools the applicant proposes to replicate or expand will recruit and enroll educationally disadvantaged students.

Strengths:

NACA will recruit students through a variety of means that are authentic for the community it serves (churches, home visits, information sessions, media, e.g. p.29). NACA commits to special education compliance and the laws protecting students with disabilities (p.30-31).

Weaknesses:

NACA does not specify how it intends to identify and recruit ELL and/or students with disabilities or what the criteria for "hard to reach populations" refers to (p. 29).

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Evaluation Plan

- 1. In determining the quality of the evaluation plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the alignment of the evaluation plan to the logic model for the proposed grant project and the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the proposed grant project articulated in the applicant's response to application requirement (c) and will produce quantitative and qualitative data by the end of the performance period.**

Strengths:

There are separate logic models provided for the Education (p. 19), Expansion and Replication (p. 43) with program goals, activities and performance measures.

The Strategic and Management plans provide timelines for expansion and replication and have committed staff for each goal.

Strategic planning has involved multiple stakeholders and activities and evidence of support is provided (Appendix C).

Evidence for the 12 year experience of effective management and academic performance is reportedly related to the Central Office model that supports finance, operations, community engagement and achievement. A shared decision making model is provided for the Central Office activities (Table 3.1 p.38) leaving the function of the individual schools to implement the educational and social emotional models. The School sites are organized hierarchically (Table 3.2 p. 39).

Weaknesses:

The measures proposed in the Evaluation Plan (Table 8) are primarily internal assessments with the exception of the PARCC standardized assessment. The logic model is not aligned to an evaluation plan containing specific measureable objectives. There is little evidence that an outside, independent evaluation will produce both qualitative and quantitative data that will be completed within the grant cycle.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel

- 1. In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel to replicate or expand high-quality charter schools under the proposed project, the Secretary considers—**

Reader's Score: 14

Sub Question

- 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**

Strengths:

The management plan provides for personnel and allocation of resources consistent with the project tasks. The Central Office provides support to all schools within the CMO allowing for an economy of scale model of managing resources.

The Expansion and Replication Timeline (Table 6) provides yearly growth expectations by grade and seat for each of the NACA schools.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

The multi-year timeline provided does not include timelines for accomplishment of stated goals (Table 5, p e51).

Reader's Score: 4

- 2. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, chief executive officer or organization leader, and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project; and**

Strengths:

A management plan and personnel structures are provided that suggest that those involved in the project will have the expertise and time allocation necessary to implement the grant. There are two major activities identified, CMO Capacity Building and New and Expanding Schools, each with a set of associated milestones, Persons Responsible, Timeline and Plan Year (e 53). Additionally, the Expansion and Replication Timeline is provided that includes staggered planning and opening for each of the sites proposed (Table 6, p. e52). The personnel descriptions provided for the Central Office and School level positions along with the timelines and persons responsible provide evidence of the experience needed to manage the project.

Weaknesses:

There are no resumes attached to this application.

Reader's Score: 7

- 3. The ability of the applicant to sustain the operation of the replicated or expanded charter schools after the grant has ended, as demonstrated by the multi-year financial and operating model included in the applicant's response to application requirement (g).**

Strengths:

There are clear timelines and activities associated with sustainability following the grant period.

NACA spends less per pupil than BCPSS because of unequal distribution of funding for Charter Schools in Baltimore (p. 40) and receives additional revenue for Special Needs students.

Weaknesses:

While a clear management plan is provided there is reference to decreased ACADEMIC performance due to changes in NACA model and operations imposed by the authorizer (p. 12-13) without a model of adjustment and/or reallocation of resources to insure student achievement was not compromised. This makes the reader question sustainability in light of potential changes in budget and structure at the State and District levels. The 2015 budget revenue fell below that of prior years in all areas with the exception of "other income".

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Promoting Diversity

1. This priority is for projects that will provide for the replication or expansion of high-quality charter schools that have an intentional focus on recruiting and retaining racially and socioeconomically diverse student bodies (see Section 4305(b)(5)(A) of the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA).

Note: For information on permissible ways to meet this priority, please refer to the joint guidance issued by the Department's Office for Civil Rights and the U.S. Department of Justice entitled, "Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity and Avoid Racial Isolation in Elementary and Secondary Schools" (www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/guidance-ese-2011111.pdf).

Strengths:

Freedom and Democracy Schools Inc. (F&D) dba as Northwood Appold Community Academy (NACA) in Baltimore serves a high percentage of African American (100%) and FARM program students (88%) and is expanding into one of the poorest neighborhoods in Baltimore, Sand town where 34% of residents live below the federal poverty level (p.50).

Weaknesses:

The demographics differ "substantially" from schools in the state and the high percentage of African American students is "inconsistent with Baltimore City's ethnic composition" (p. 7). There is no racial and/or socioeconomic diversity planned for in the replication or expansion model. Concerns are that this will become a racially isolated school, in contrast to the anti-racist model it proposes.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - School Improvement through Turnaround Efforts

1. This priority is for applicants that both:
 - (a) Demonstrate past success in improving the academic performance of one or more academically poor-performing public schools by taking over the operation of the school or restarting the school as a charter school; and
 - (b) Propose to use CMO funds to restart as a charter school one or more academically poor-performing public schools during the project period, to do so by replicating a successful charter school model for which the applicant has provided evidence of success, and to do so by targeting a similar student population in the replicated charter school as was served by the academically poor-performing public school. In accordance with section 4310(2)(B) of the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA, students who are enrolled in the academically poor-performing public school at the time of restart are exempt from the charter school's lottery.

For purposes of this priority, academically poor-performing public schools may include, but are not limited to, persistently lowest-achieving schools, as defined in this notice and the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program under Title I of the ESEA (<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2015/02/09/2015-02570/final-requirements-school-improvement-grants-title-i-of-the-elementary-and-secondary-education-act>); and priority schools in States that exercised flexibility¹ under the ESEA, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) (see the Department's June 7, 2012 guidance entitled, "ESEA Flexibility," at www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility, and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education's December 18, 2015 Dear Colleague Letter at <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/transition-dcl.pdf>).

Note: For applicants proposing to use CMO grant funds to replicate a high-quality charter school by restarting as a charter school one or more academically poor-performing public schools, the CMO's proposed charter school must be newly created and operating under a separate charter and governance than the academically poor-performing public school.

Footnote 1: As of August 1, 2016, States may no longer exercise flexibility, except in the limited circumstances where they implemented interventions previously in priority schools under the SIG program. For additional information related to ESEA flexibility and interventions in priority schools, see section B of the Department's June 29, 2016 guidance entitled, "Transitioning to the Every Student Succeeds Act – Frequently Asked Questions," at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essafaqtransition62916.pdf>.

Strengths:

The applicant did not respond to this priority.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not respond to this priority.

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 06/29/2017 05:32 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/05/2017 03:39 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY SCHOOLS FOUNDATION, INC., THE (U282M170032)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Eligible Applicant		
1. Quality of Applicant	45	39
Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students		
1. Disadvantaged Students	25	19
Quality of the Evaluation Plan		
1. Evaluation Plan	10	7
Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel		
1. Management Plan/Personnel	20	13
Sub Total	100	78
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Promoting Diversity		
1. CPP 1	3	0
School Improvement through Turnaround Efforts		
1. CPP 2	5	0
Sub Total	8	0
Total	108	78

Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - Charter Management Organization - 4: 84.282M

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY SCHOOLS FOUNDATION, INC., THE (U282M170032)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Eligible Applicant

1. Comments should support your recommendation according to the Selection Criteria. Please address each section and provide your scores for each section separately.

Reader's Score: 39

Sub Question

1. The degree to which the applicant has demonstrated success in increasing academic achievement, including graduation rates where applicable, for all students and for each of the subgroups of students described in section 1111(c)(2) of the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA, attending the charter schools the applicant operates or manages.

Strengths:

Reading and math achievement at grades 3-5 is above the city and state averages for all students for the three years examined. Middle school reading achievement is above the state and city for African American students (P e17-18, 20-21). The applicant notes that the achievement gap in grades three through five between NACA African American students and white Baltimore County Public Schools System (BCPSS) students for years 2011-2013 is closing, with differences of only single-digits (P e19-20). The applicant noted on page e9 that 21 of the 28 of the most recent NACA graduates (75 percent) will attend college, higher than BCPSS (28.8 percent) and the state of Maryland (29.3 percent). The achievement gap in reading proficiency between NACA middle school students and white students in BCPSS and Maryland improved between 2011 and 2013, with a .6 percent difference between white BCPSS students and NACA students in 2013, up from a 2 percent difference in 2011 (P e21)

Weaknesses:

Middle school math achievement is below the state average as well as below city and state averages for white students and African American students in Baltimore city schools (P e22). The applicant notes that there is an achievement gap between the performance of African American students and non-Free and Reduced Meal (FARM) white students at the middle school level (P e19); specifically, the achievement gap in math results between white BCPSS students and NACA students showed NACA students scoring 16 percent lower in 2011, 17 percent lower in 2012, with the performance gap increasing in 2013 to nearly 21 percent (P e22).

Reader's Score: 13

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

Strengths:

The applicant reports college acceptance rates of 75 percent for the first graduating class (P e121). Attendance is at a higher percentage than the city and state for all grades except at high school (P e23). The percentage of FARM

Sub Question

and African American students promoted to the next grade level exceed city and state percentages (P e24-25).

Weaknesses:

Performance data for economically disadvantaged (FARM) students is not reported separately, thus the academic performance of that student group cannot be identified precisely.

Reader's Score: 12

- 3. The extent to which charter schools operated or managed by the applicant have not been closed; have not had a charter revoked due to noncompliance with statutory or regulatory requirements; have not had their affiliation with the applicant revoked or terminated, including through voluntary disaffiliation; have not had any significant issues in the area of financial or operational management; have not experienced significant problems with statutory or regulatory compliance that could lead to revocation of the school's charter; and have not had any significant issues with respect to student safety.**

Strengths:

There have been no reported issues of noncompliance, closure, and statutory and regulatory compliance disclosed for The Freedom and Democracy Schools Foundation in the application.

Weaknesses:

Because the applicant did not make a statement to this effect, the reviewer must surmise the irregularities do not exist, but there is no assurance from the applicant to this effect.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students

- 1. The significance of the contribution the proposed project will make in expanding educational opportunities for educationally disadvantaged students and enabling those students to meet challenging State academic standards. In determining the significance of the contribution the proposed project will make, the Secretary**

Reader's Score: 19

Sub Question

- 1. The extent to which charter schools currently operated or managed by the applicant serve educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and English learners, at rates comparable to surrounding public schools; and**

Strengths:

The middle school serves the same percentage of FARM students than the city and significantly more than the state (P e13-14). Special education percentages are consistent with the city and higher than the state at middle school (P e15). Elementary schools serve a slightly higher percentage of FARM students than the city and state, as well as a smaller percentage of special education students (P e13-16).

Weaknesses:

It is difficult to determine if the English Language Learner (ELL) population is similar to or different than the state as the Northwood-Appold Community Academy (NACA) schools use a designation, Standard English Learner (SEL), that is not used by the city or state. Thus, no comparisons can be made for this student group in order to measure the grant objective (P e15-16). Standard English Learners (SEL) and ELL students are intentionally grouped together as a subgroup, and strategies for addressing the needs of SEL learners is described on P e32, but no specific strategies for enrolling or educating ELL learners are described by the applicant.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 7

2. **The quality of the plan to ensure that the charter schools the applicant proposes to replicate or expand will recruit and enroll educationally disadvantaged students.**

Strengths:

P e35 of the narrative details strategies to enroll additional FARM students in the replicated model, including targeted recruitment efforts, advertising in various media platforms, and strategic location of school sites. The applicant provides evidence of assurances designed to retain enrolled special education students (P e36-37)

Weaknesses:

Although detailed information is provided regarding current compliance with special education laws and procedures under IDEA-B, no plan is presented to recruit and retain students with disabilities. There is no information provided that specifies the recruitment of English Language Learners (P e35-36).

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Evaluation Plan

1. **In determining the quality of the evaluation plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the alignment of the evaluation plan to the logic model for the proposed grant project and the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the proposed grant project articulated in the applicant's response to application requirement (c) and will produce quantitative and qualitative data by the end of the performance period.**

Strengths:

The logic model presented is directly linked to the goals of the grant with measurable outputs. The model is congruent with the stated goals of the grant project as listed on p. e51. Quantitative measures described include a year by year chart showing expansion by seats at each NACA campus (P e52), and qualitative measures including satisfaction measures of strong culture and academic success for stakeholders and increased student learning and achievement (P e50). Performance measures are quantifiable and are clearly linked to the outcomes listed in the logic model (P e51).

Weaknesses:

Because the activities listed in the logic model are not directly linked to a timeline, it may be difficult to use the logic model as a viable effectiveness evaluation tool to measure the quantifiable outputs (P e26).

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel

1. **In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel to replicate or expand high-quality charter schools under the proposed project, the Secretary considers—**

Reader's Score: 13

Sub Question

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**

Sub Question

Strengths:

The timeline listed in the management plan is linked to specific grant milestones and directed towards accomplishment of the two grant goals, CMO capacity and new/expanding schools (P e51). Personnel responsible for the accomplishment of grant objectives are current management staff of Freedom and Democracy Schools.

Weaknesses:

The timeline in the management plan is very broad, lacking specific, measurable points in time but using broad date ranges instead, and may not be narrow enough to ensure tasks are completed within the proper timeframes. There are no budgeted grant allocations included in the management plan which may inhibit the ability of the leadership team to determine if grant dollars were used effectively, for the purposes they were intended for, and in a timely manner before the conclusion of the grant in year five (P e52-54).

Reader's Score: 3

2. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, chief executive officer or organization leader, and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project; and

Strengths:

The team qualifications are consistent with grant goals as team members are current NACA leadership staff who have verifiable charter management experience (P e63-65).

Weaknesses:

Some of the team member responsibilities listed in the program evaluation and management plan (p e62) are overly broad, possibly leading to a duplication of efforts in the accomplishment of grant activities and an inefficient use of resources. There is a lack of information in the same narrative indicating how staff will be recruited (P e52-60).

Note - This application was thoroughly discussed with respect to each selection criterion. My scores reflect my professional assessment of the application with respect to those criteria.

Reader's Score: 6

3. The ability of the applicant to sustain the operation of the replicated or expanded charter schools after the grant has ended, as demonstrated by the multi-year financial and operating model included in the applicant's response to application requirement (g).

Strengths:

The grant application details characteristics of the CMO that should lead to sustainability after the grant period has ended, including high levels of community engagement, numerous community and corporate sponsorships, and verifiable years of staff experience, assuming staff retention percentages are high (P e47-50). The applicant notes that all of the operating expenses of the new school and the expanded schools will be covered by state and local revenue, enhanced by targeted fundraising (P e57).

Weaknesses:

One of the keys to the sustainability of the grant will be to ensure staff retention percentages are high. Because the applicant had mentioned some previous experiences of low academic performance due to not-yet fully credentialed and trained teachers (p e19), staff retention may need to be an even greater focus throughout the grant period.

Reader's Score: 4

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Promoting Diversity

1. This priority is for projects that will provide for the replication or expansion of high-quality charter schools that have an intentional focus on recruiting and retaining racially and socioeconomically diverse student bodies (see Section 4305(b)(5)(A) of the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA).

Note: For information on permissible ways to meet this priority, please refer to the joint guidance issued by the Department's Office for Civil Rights and the U.S. Department of Justice entitled, "Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity and Avoid Racial Isolation in Elementary and Secondary Schools" (www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/guidance-ese-2011111.pdf).

Strengths:

There is an overall goal to achieve economic diversity (P e7) and an effort to add up to 40 percent of students who are classified as non-FARM. Throughout the application narrative it is apparent that school is generally inclusive in its efforts to promote a charter education to a racially and economically diverse student population.

Weaknesses:

The initial strategy focuses primarily on economic diversity. The school proposes a focused recruiting effort outside of the immediate school geographic locations to increase by up to 40 percent of the student population a non-FARM cohort through the targeted recruitment of students in locations that have higher percentages of non-FARM students. This effort does not specifically address the racial diversity component of Priority One, only economic diversity, as it cannot be assumed nor does it state in the narrative that the new students will also reflect a racially diverse demographic.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - School Improvement through Turnaround Efforts

1. This priority is for applicants that both:

(a) Demonstrate past success in improving the academic performance of one or more academically poor-performing public schools by taking over the operation of the school or restarting the school as a charter school; and

(b) Propose to use CMO funds to restart as a charter school one or more academically poor-performing public schools during the project period, to do so by replicating a successful charter school model for which the applicant has provided evidence of success, and to do so by targeting a similar student population in the replicated charter school as was served by the academically poor-performing public school. In accordance with section 4310(2)(B) of the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA, students who are enrolled in the academically poor-performing public school at the time of restart are exempt from the charter school's lottery.

For purposes of this priority, academically poor-performing public schools may include, but are not limited to, persistently lowest-achieving schools, as defined in this notice and the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program under Title I of the ESEA (<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2015/02/09/2015-02570/final-requirements-school-improvement-grants-title-i-of-the-elementary-and-secondary-education-act>); and priority schools in States that exercised flexibility¹ under the ESEA, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) (see the Department's June 7, 2012 guidance entitled, "ESEA Flexibility," at www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility, and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education's December 18, 2015 Dear Colleague Letter at <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/transition-dcl.pdf>).

Note: For applicants proposing to use CMO grant funds to replicate a high-quality charter school by restarting as a charter school one or more academically poor-performing public schools, the CMO's proposed charter school must be newly created and operating under a separate charter and governance than the academically poor-performing public school.

Footnote 1: As of August 1, 2016, States may no longer exercise flexibility, except in the limited circumstances where they implemented interventions previously in priority schools under the SIG program. For additional information related to ESEA flexibility and interventions in priority schools, see section B of the Department's June 29, 2016 guidance entitled, "Transitioning to the Every Student Succeeds Act – Frequently Asked Questions," at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essafaqtransition62916.pdf>.

Strengths:

There is no evidence that the applicant has attempted or is attempting school turnaround efforts. The applicant does not describe any instances where they have identified failing or closed schools and attempted to turnaround or restart those schools.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not provide a strategy for Preference Priority Two.

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/05/2017 03:39 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/05/2017 02:05 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY SCHOOLS FOUNDATION, INC., THE (U282M170032)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Eligible Applicant		
1. Quality of Applicant	45	43
Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students		
1. Disadvantaged Students	25	20
Quality of the Evaluation Plan		
1. Evaluation Plan	10	6
Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel		
1. Management Plan/Personnel	20	15
Sub Total	100	84
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Promoting Diversity		
1. CPP 1	3	0
School Improvement through Turnaround Efforts		
1. CPP 2	5	0
Sub Total	8	0
Total	108	84

Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - Charter Management Organization - 4: 84.282M

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY SCHOOLS FOUNDATION, INC., THE (U282M170032)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Eligible Applicant

1. Comments should support your recommendation according to the Selection Criteria. Please address each section and provide your scores for each section separately.

Reader's Score: 43

Sub Question

1. The degree to which the applicant has demonstrated success in increasing academic achievement, including graduation rates where applicable, for all students and for each of the subgroups of students described in section 1111(c)(2) of the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA, attending the charter schools the applicant operates or manages.

Strengths:

When compared to district and state peers, NACA outperforms on academic proficiency measures for Grades 3-5 ELA and Math (p. e19). Additionally, the applicant offers evidence for closing the achievement gap between economically disadvantaged, African American 3-5 graders and White, non-FARM peers (p. e19). The program of academic advisement offers compelling results and data supporting expansion (p. e21). Math scores in Middle School are lagging but the school has a new curriculum to address it (p e22).

Weaknesses:

Middle school achievement data is not as strong as in the elementary grades, especially in Math (p. e22).

Reader's Score: 14

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

Strengths:

The applicant primarily serves educationally disadvantaged students at a comparable portion of the student population as Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) (p. e11). The application cites retention and college acceptance data from initial cohort to support the claim that academic achievement has surpassed the neighboring district schools and the state averages (p. e10). Average attendance rates and suspensions are considerably better than the state and district (p. e23). When compared to local and state peers, NACA's consistently higher achievement in Reading compared to that of demographically similar students from traditional LEA and MD State schools, with NACA's students scoring sometimes as many as 15 percentage points more than the comparison group (NACA's 73.7% compared to BCPSS' 58.56% in 2012).(p. e 21). NACA's elementary students (grades 3-5) consistently outperformed their peers at both Baltimore City schools and all other traditional schools in the State of Maryland in reading and mathematics. When taken as an aggregate and controlling at the LEA and State groups for

Sub Question

race/ethnicity and socio-economic levels to mirror NACA's demographics, NACA students outperformed their peers in Reading with more than 80% scoring at grade level (Proficient) or above (Advanced) for all three years. BCPSS students averaged 67% to 70% and MD State's students averaged 74% to 76% Proficient/Advanced. Additionally (p. e17).

Weaknesses:

When compared to the highest performing demographics at the local and state level, NACA has not yet closed the achievement gap for Reading in grades 3-5 (p. e 21). Also, the introduction of the new PARCC statewide test makes longitudinal data comparisons difficult.

Reader's Score: 14

3. The extent to which charter schools operated or managed by the applicant have not been closed; have not had a charter revoked due to noncompliance with statutory or regulatory requirements; have not had their affiliation with the applicant revoked or terminated, including through voluntary disaffiliation; have not had any significant issues in the area of financial or operational management; have not experienced significant problems with statutory or regulatory compliance that could lead to revocation of the school's charter; and have not had any significant issues with respect to student safety.

Strengths:

There is no indication that the candidate hasn't met requirements for compliance.

Weaknesses:

none noted

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students

1. The significance of the contribution the proposed project will make in expanding educational opportunities for educationally disadvantaged students and enabling those students to meet challenging State academic standards. In determining the significance of the contribution the proposed project will make, the Secretary

Reader's Score: 20

Sub Question

1. The extent to which charter schools currently operated or managed by the applicant serve educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and English learners, at rates comparable to surrounding public schools; and

Strengths:

Middle and High school special needs populations in upper grades are higher than district average and this is reflected in the school's educational approach (p e36). They serve a special needs population of 9% in elementary school, 18% in middle school and 31% in high school (p. e36). These rates are substantially higher in middle school and high school than the BCPSS average of 16% (p. e36).

Weaknesses:

Elementary special needs population is lower than district rates and the programing modifications for high special needs population are unclear.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 8

- 2. The quality of the plan to ensure that the charter schools the applicant proposes to replicate or expand will recruit and enroll educationally disadvantaged students.**

Strengths:

Additionally, there is demonstrated evidence that the school is making comparatively strong progress for educationally disadvantaged students when compared to the city and state (p. e24-25). The applicant cites their current recruitment plan which effectively targets educationally disadvantaged students (p. e35). They use media coverage, information sessions.

Weaknesses:

No specific evidence that new enrollment plans will specifically target educationally disadvantaged students. It only refers to what they already do (p. e30)

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Evaluation Plan

- 1. In determining the quality of the evaluation plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the alignment of the evaluation plan to the logic model for the proposed grant project and the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the proposed grant project articulated in the applicant's response to application requirement (c) and will produce quantitative and qualitative data by the end of the performance period.**

Strengths:

Specific metrics and project objectives are identified in the evaluation plan as well as a timeline

The applicant proposes a logic model that has identified outcomes. The organization operates with a multi-year financial model and has a plan for closing schools when necessary (p e43-54).

Weaknesses:

The application includes an evaluation plan but the metrics and process are unclear (p e62). There is no mention of using an external evaluator who will complete an independent evaluation using qualitative and quantitative scores. (p. e61-63).

Reader's Score: 6

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel

- 1. In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel to replicate or expand high-quality charter schools under the proposed project, the Secretary considers—**

Reader's Score: 15

Sub Question

- 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**

Sub Question

Strengths:

NACA plans to conduct professional development sessions to prepare staff for expansion during its annual summer administrative retreat (p. e127). Additionally, the applicant provides a detailed management plan with timeline. (p. e124)

Weaknesses:

The applicant submits a management plan but it is not clearly aligned to logic model or previously stated program goals and milestones. The staffing plan is vague and does not include plans for filling new positions or a succession plan. The timeline is vague and only pertains to operational tasks (p. e124). Lastly, The professional development appears repetitive in subsequent years, especially for Teachers Curriculum Institute (TCI) and Teachers College (TC) (p. e223).

Reader's Score: 3

2. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, chief executive officer or organization leader, and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project; and

Strengths:

The applicant has a staff that all have backgrounds in education and the school has already experienced expansion previously. (e63-65)

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not note any previous experience managing large grants or expansion projects. Also, resumes of staff are not included as evidence in the application. Finally, there is insufficient information about how the schools will recruit and hire new leadership and no evidence of a formal leader pipeline program

Reader's Score: 8

3. The ability of the applicant to sustain the operation of the replicated or expanded charter schools after the grant has ended, as demonstrated by the multi-year financial and operating model included in the applicant's response to application requirement (g).

Strengths:

The applicant provides ample evidence of strong community partnerships and ties to local organizations (p. e129). Additionally, operation expenses will be covered by state and local revenue. The budget model ensures that the core educational program will operate exclusively with public funds (p. e47). Lastly, the budget narrative details the proposed spending for each project year and demonstrates that NACA will plan for sustainability and operate the core academic program solely on public funds (p. e218-237).

Weaknesses:

It is unclear what will happen when staffing allocations from the grant are finished.

Reader's Score: 4

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Promoting Diversity

1. This priority is for projects that will provide for the replication or expansion of high-quality charter schools that have an intentional focus on recruiting and retaining racially and socioeconomically diverse student bodies (see Section 4305(b)(5)(A) of the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA).

Note: For information on permissible ways to meet this priority, please refer to the joint guidance issued by the

Department's Office for Civil Rights and the U.S. Department of Justice entitled, "Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity and Avoid Racial Isolation in Elementary and Secondary Schools" (www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/guidance-ese-201111.pdf).

Strengths:

The applicant has a targeted recruitment program and has increased Free and Reduced Meal (FARM) enrollment from 35% to 81% and the leadership is making an intentional goal of creating socioeconomic diversity at the school. (p. E8)

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not have target goals for racial diversity.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - School Improvement through Turnaround Efforts

1. This priority is for applicants that both:

(a) Demonstrate past success in improving the academic performance of one or more academically poor-performing public schools by taking over the operation of the school or restarting the school as a charter school; and

(b) Propose to use CMO funds to restart as a charter school one or more academically poor-performing public schools during the project period, to do so by replicating a successful charter school model for which the applicant has provided evidence of success, and to do so by targeting a similar student population in the replicated charter school as was served by the academically poor-performing public school. In accordance with section 4310(2)(B) of the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA, students who are enrolled in the academically poor-performing public school at the time of restart are exempt from the charter school's lottery.

For purposes of this priority, academically poor-performing public schools may include, but are not limited to, persistently lowest-achieving schools, as defined in this notice and the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program under Title I of the ESEA (<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2015/02/09/2015-02570/final-requirements-school-improvement-grants-title-i-of-the-elementary-and-secondary-education-act>); and priority schools in States that exercised flexibility¹ under the ESEA, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) (see the Department's June 7, 2012 guidance entitled, "ESEA Flexibility," at www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility, and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education's December 18, 2015 Dear Colleague Letter at <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/transition-dcl.pdf>).

Note: For applicants proposing to use CMO grant funds to replicate a high-quality charter school by restarting as a charter school one or more academically poor-performing public schools, the CMO's proposed charter school must be newly created and operating under a separate charter and governance than the academically poor-performing public school.

Footnote 1: As of August 1, 2016, States may no longer exercise flexibility, except in the limited circumstances where they implemented interventions previously in priority schools under the SIG program. For additional information related to ESEA flexibility and interventions in priority schools, see section B of the Department's June 29, 2016 guidance entitled, "Transitioning to the Every Student Succeeds Act – Frequently Asked Questions," at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essafaqtransition62916.pdf>.

Strengths:

The applicant did not respond to this priority.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not respond to this priority.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
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