

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/29/2016 09:40 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: IDEA Public Schools (U282M160009)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Eligible Applicant		
1. Quality of Applicant	50	50
Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students		
1. Disadvantaged Students	10	10
Quality of the Project Design		
1. Project Design	10	10
Quality of the Management Plan & Personnel		
1. Management Plan/Personnel	20	20
Quality of Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	10	9
Sub Total	100	99
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Supporting High-Need Students		
1. CPP 1	5	4
Promoting Diversity		
1. CPP 2	3	3
Sub Total	8	7
Total	108	106

Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - Charter Management Organization - 5: 84.282M

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: IDEA Public Schools (U282M160009)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Eligible Applicant

In determining the quality of the applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors--

Reader's Score: 50

Sub Question

1. The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement and attainment for all students, including, as applicable, educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (20 points).

Strengths:

In nearly every comparison – across all subjects and grades for every year of the past three years, IDEA consistently outperformed all three comparison regions and the state as a whole, for all students, on state assessments (pages 15 and 16 show that out of 90 comparisons presented, IDEA outscores on 87, for 97%, also noted in Appendixes F and H4).

IDEA's scores across four indices – Student Achievement, Student Progress, Post-Secondary Readiness and Closing Performance Gaps - demonstrate significant achievement above and beyond the targets set by the state (page 16).

IDEA had all seven of its fully scaled high schools ranked among the top 3% in the nation by both U.S. News and World Report and appears on The Washington Post's index of the most challenging high schools in America (page 3).

As 89% of IDEA population are disadvantaged, 35% ELL, 95% Hispanic, these results show that the CMO has significantly increased student achievement and attainment for all students, including educationally disadvantaged students. Whereas low-income and Hispanic students typically perform two to three years below their wealthier peers, IDEA students do not, and the proficiency rates rise as students progress through grades in IDEA (79% of 4th graders proficient, then 93% of 8th graders proficient, on page 15).

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.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

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: 20

2. (i) **The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in closing historic achievement gaps for the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant, or**

(ii) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which there have not been significant achievement gaps between any of the subgroups of students described in section 1111 (b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant and to which significant gains in student academic achievement have been made with all populations of students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (15 points).

Strengths:

The applicant responds to criteria 2i on page 21. Appendix F contains additional data.

The applicant provides convincing information to demonstrate their consistency over the past three years in closing historic achievement gaps for student subgroups.

The schools serve a large percentage of students that belong to subgroups having historic achievement gaps: Hispanic (94.7%), English-language Learners (34.8%) and economically disadvantaged (89.1%) students.

The applicant provides three years of data on the performance of IDEA schools compared to state-level data disaggregated by grade level, subject area, and subpopulation (African American, Hispanic, white, Asian, economically disadvantaged, ELL, and Special Education) in Appendix F. for proof that IDEA's model closes achievement gaps regardless of disadvantage.

There are no gaps between non-economically disadvantaged and disadvantaged students (page 20), and IDEA students outperform state averages for each subgroup (pages 21 and 22).

IDEA is also closing the achievement gap for AP enrollment (IDEA students complete 11 AP courses) and long term (ultimate) academic achievement, as IDEA students graduate from college at a rate that is more than four times that national average for low-income students (pages 11 and 29). 78.8% of IDEA's low-income students have graduated from college compared to the 6%, 9%, and 15% in nearby regions (page 13).

Lastly, the White House Initiative on Education Excellence for Hispanics named IDEA a Bright Spot in Hispanic Education in 2015 (page 3).

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.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

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.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 15

3. The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has achieved results (including performance on statewide tests, annual student attendance and retention rates, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates where applicable and available) for low-income and other educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant that are significantly above the average academic achievement results for such students in the State (15 points).

Strengths:

IDEA serves a population that is significantly more educationally and economically disadvantaged than that of the entire state (page 9), yet its academic results are stronger overall.

The applicant provides three years of consistently increasing average ACT scores (page 18), and percent enrolled in Texas Institutions of Higher Education, college matriculation, college persistence/graduation, enrollment in Tier I or Tier II colleges or universities, and designation of "AP Scholar" on pages 20-21.

Strong and consistent attendance, retention and high school graduation rates (disaggregated by low-income, ELL and Special Education, where available), that are higher than state averages, are provided on page 17.

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.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

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: 15

Selection Criteria - Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students

1. The contribution the proposed project will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged students served by the applicant to meet or exceed State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards, and to graduate college- and career-ready. When responding to this selection criterion, applicants must discuss the proposed locations of schools to be created or substantially expanded and the student populations to be served.

Note: The Secretary encourages applicants to describe their prior success in improving educational achievement and outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and English learners. In addition, the Secretary encourages applicants to address how they will ensure that all eligible students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education and how the proposed project will assist educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and English learners, in mastering State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.

Strengths:

The proposed project is to expand two schools in San Antonio, and create 16 replication schools (8 in El Paso, 4 in Baton Rouge and 4 in Southeast Louisiana near Baton Rouge), adding 5,545 new high-quality charter school seats during the funding period—14,117 new high-quality seats when all schools are fully scaled (pages 4 and 28). The applicant carefully

vets where schools will be located (Appendix H3).

IDEA's record of improving educational outcomes is impressive, considering 49.3% of all IDEA's students are considered at-risk of dropping out of school due to one or more social, economic, or academic factors (page 24). The data provided makes it clear that they have an established record preparing a high needs population with the academic skills needed to graduate college and career ready.

The applicant describes prior success serving students with disabilities and English language learners, and specifically includes information about Special Education services in the mailing sent to 30,000 homes (page 26). The applicant describes how they serve the unique learning needs of students with disabilities on pages 7-8 and 25-28. For example, Direct Instruction is used in grades PK-2 for reading and math, and individualized Critical Student Intervention Supports in reading and math are used for grades 3-7 students. Core supports are provided for grades 8-12 during an individualized instruction period called "Catalyst." Students with disabilities also benefit from a Content Mastery period, and from life skill classrooms. The applicant also describes related services, such as occupational therapy, on page 26.

The proposed project is to expand two schools in San Antonio, and create 16 replication schools (8 in El Paso, 4 in Baton Rouge and 4 in Southeast Louisiana near Baton Rouge), adding 5,545 new high-quality charter school seats during the funding period— or 14,117 new high-quality seats when all schools are fully scaled (pages 4 and 28). The applicant carefully vets where schools will be located (Appendix H3).

The population to be served will be reflective of the communities where schools will be located. The schools' academic outcomes – even with highly educationally disadvantaged population of 89.1% low income and 34.8% ELL - and positive reputation -have led to a waitlist of 22,683 students (page 2).

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.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

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: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified, measurable, and attainable. Applicants proposing to open schools serving substantially different populations than those currently served by the model for which they have demonstrated evidence of success must address the attainability of outcomes given this difference.**

Strengths:

The applicant presents goals that are clear, measurable, rigorous and attainable, given the organization's track record (page 38). Goals include student academics, college matriculation and graduation, and organizational goals (student persistence, finances, enrollment, etc.)

The academic goals are rigorous (from the abstract):

- 90% of PreK-K students on or above grade level in reading, language and math
- 90% students earn passing score on State standardized exams;
- 30% of students earn commended score on State standardized exams;
- Average ACT score of 21.25;
- 100% of graduates accepted to a college or university;
- 99% of graduates matriculate to college/university;
- 35% of students graduate college in 4 years and 45% graduate in 6 years.

The applicant provides data on state standards proving IDEA can rapidly replicate while maintaining a high level of academic quality with a majority economically/educationally disadvantaged population (page 10).

IDEA's School Launch model has been proven, as evidenced by being named a Broad Prize finalist for the past three years (page 2). With support of the Broad Prize and the Charter School Growth Fund, it is very reasonable that the Project Design will be realized.

The applicant thoroughly describes the educational approach. IDEA teaches on a K-16 continuum aligned to the end goal of college graduation. The applicant describes the approaches used during different grade spans. For example, Pre-K-2 uses direct instruction and personalized learning (DreamBox, Reasoning Minds and Accelerated Reader (page 32), and a mastery based AVID program is used beginning in 9th grade.

A partnership with the National Math and Science Initiative (page 34) has resulted in maximizing the number of students who pass Advanced Placement (AP) exams while strengthening AP participation. For example, 94% of IDEA Pharr AP Spanish students earned qualifying scores of 3 or higher (page 34). IDEA was awarded a 2016 CSP Dissemination grant to share its "AP for All" practices. Additionally, IDEA explains how they support students in the college process, including that each student visits at least 20 colleges prior to graduation and college acceptance is a requirement for receiving a diploma.

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.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

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: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan & Personnel

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel to replicate and substantially expand high-quality charter schools (as defined in this notice). In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers-

Reader's Score: 20

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 (4 points).**

Strengths:

Major Project Management Activities and Milestones are provided on pages 39-42. The staff member responsible for each activity and the timeline for completion are clear. There will be a full time Project Director responsible for overall management of the project.

The organizational chart outlines the staff and responsibilities, with particular attention to the roles and responsibilities of central management and the schools. The CMO provides back office support, the cafeteria program (which includes locally grown organic vegetables), transportation, IT, textbooks, financial software, and purchasing. Additionally, the CMO provides start up services, including working with authorizers and the community, talent acquisition, facilities acquisition and governance, among other functions. A clear understanding of new school start-up tasks is evident in Appendix H13. Having opened 44 schools, the organization has created a "School in a Box" filled with tools, resources and lessons learned.

The applicant was awarded Investing in Innovation (I3) and Educator Excellence Innovation Project (EEIP) grants for their practices in human capital, teacher recruitment and retention. Staff responsibilities are clearly delineated – e.g., the principal as instructional leader, the assistant principal for operations/non-academic/logistics, an assistant principal for instruction, and a college counseling team (pages 46-48).

The applicant outlines the specific data to be collected from the beginning throughout the term of the project.

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.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

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: 4

- 2. The business plan for improving, sustaining, and ensuring the quality and performance of charter schools created or substantially expanded under these grants beyond the initial period of Federal funding in areas including, but not limited to, facilities, financial management, central office, student academic achievement, governance, oversight, and human resources of the charter schools (4 points).**

Strengths:

The Business Plan includes clear delineation of central management and school roles and responsibilities. This includes start-up services (including facilities acquisition and facilities management), talent acquisition, organizational structure, and providing ongoing supports, including a common curricular framework, student assessment system, and weekly data conversations (pages 42-44 and pages 49-50). This allows consistency

Sub Question

across the organization, efficiencies, and for the schools to be able to concentrate efforts on instruction and serving student needs.

The Business Plan is for schools to be fiscally self-sufficient after three years. CMO management fees are just 8% (page 48).

Based on the information found on pages 42-52, the applicant evidences a thorough understanding of charter school management, including fundraising, financial and academic monitoring, operational support, and governance. The applicant notes the importance of building trusting relationship with stakeholders, including funders, families and community leaders and other partners. The applicant's strengths in these areas make prospects of long-term sustainability highly plausible.

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.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

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: 4

3. A multi-year financial and operating model for the organization, a demonstrated commitment of current and future partners, and evidence of broad support from stakeholders critical to the project's long-term success (4 points).

Strengths:

The applicant provides multiple letters of support from parents and students, in Louisiana, El Paso and San Antonio. There are also letters from two US State Senators, New Schools for Baton Rouge, Baton Rouge Area Foundation, 100 Black Men of Baton Rouge, members of Congress, YWCA, Mayor, Broad Foundation, Charter School Growth Fund, National Math & Science Initiative, Texas State Board of Education, as well as partnerships described in Appendixes C, G and H1.

In addition to winning a 2014 CSP award, the applicant has raised \$75 million from multiple funders including the Texas Education Agency Charter School Growth Fund, the Ewing Halsell Foundation, the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, the Walton Family Foundation, the Gates Foundation, and others (page 52).

There is a solid multi-year financial and operational plan in place. This is evidenced by the organization's investment grade credit rating of BBB Stable Outlook with Standard & Poor's, as well as scoring a 24 on the Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (a passing score is a "16") (page 51 and also see e396-398 and e533-536, and multiyear operating efficiency on page e488 that shows diminishing facilities costs and increasing fund balances over the years). The applicant notes that on average, each IDEA school achieves public funding solvency in its third year (page 51).

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.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

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: 4

4. The plan for closing charter schools supported, overseen, or managed by the applicant that do not meet high standards of quality (2 points).

Strengths:

The applicant describes how they monitor and intervene with schools when needed on pages 52-54. To be proactive, each school completes a Needs Assessment and Campus Improvement Plan each spring. This provides an attention to areas of need, and a coordination of interventions to correct struggles through combined efforts of the CMO and school leaders. Also within these pages, the applicant gives an example of "turnaround strategies" used at IDEA Frontier, and notes IDEA Frontier is now amongst the highest performing College Prep schools in the IDEA network and is ranked as the 15 best high school in Texas and 79th in the nation by the US News and World Report. The applicant also provides an example of a school that was closed.

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.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

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: 2

5. 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 (6 points).

Strengths:

The applicant describes the responsibilities of the Senior Leadership Team and how the Team will support the Project Director (pages 55-56). Resumes for Executive Directors are provided (appendix B). An attachment provides a list of Governing Board members and Regional Board members, including members' gender and ethnicity. The resumes of Senior Leaders are impressive. Most staff have been working with IDEA since the founding or soon after. There also is experience with The New Teacher Project. Resumes are provided for all those already on board, and position descriptions are provided for those to be hired, including members of the Research and Grant Support team.

There is strong attention to human capital and community outreach. Ken Campbell, former President of the Black Alliance for Educational Options and Director of Charter Schools for the Louisiana Department of Education, is the Executive Director for Louisiana. The Executive Director for the El Paso is still being sought.

The applicant provides data showing they have maintained quality outcomes during previous expansions (page 10), thus there is good reason to believe that they can successfully manage a project of this size and scope.

Sub Question

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.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

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

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Evaluation

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project.**

Strengths:

There will be two researchers – one for Quantitative data and one for Qualitative data. IDEA's 2014 CSP expansion grant is currently being evaluated by a third party. This existing research endeavor includes documenting policies and practices and lessons learned, all of which will be used during this expansion. An independent third party, Copia Consulting LLC (a sub-contractor to the 2014 CSP study) will carry out formative research for this project (page 57).

Research questions are identified on page 58. The research design includes case studies on central and regional functions, and internal quality controls, and involves site visits, teacher and student surveys, as well as analysis of student outcomes and progress toward goals. The applicant describes how they will share out cumulative findings on lessons learned about charter school expansion and replication with practitioners, school and district leaders, and policymakers through a range of accessible products such as webinars, practitioner briefs, and policy briefs. Research methods, instruments and design are explained on pages 58-61.

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.

Weaknesses:

Having the Project Director also be the Qualitative Researcher is likely to bring inherent bias, even if unintended (page 57). Also, there is concern about the amount of time the Project Director will be able to devote to research in light of other responsibilities.

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.

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Supporting High-Need Students

1. This priority is for projects that will serve high-need students through one of the methods described below. An application may receive points for only one of the three parts of Competitive Preference Priority 1, and should specify which part it is addressing. If an applicant addresses more than one part of Competitive Preference Priority 1 and does not specify whether it is addressing part (a), (b), or (c), the application will be awarded priority points only for the part addressed in the application that has the highest maximum potential point value, regardless of the number of priority points the application is awarded for that particular part of Competitive Preference Priority 1.

This priority is for projects that will serve high-need students through element (a), (b) or (c) as described below:

(a) Supporting High Need Students. (0 or 5 points).

Projects that are designed to improve academic outcomes, learning environments, or both, for students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes.

(b) School Improvement. (0 or 4 points).

To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that its proposed replication or expansion of one or more high-quality charter schools (as defined in this notice) will occur in partnership with, and will be designed to assist, one or more LEAs in implementing academic or structural interventions to serve students attending schools that have been identified for improvement, corrective action, closure, or restructuring under section 1116 of the ESEA, and as described in the notice of final requirements for School Improvement Grants, published in the Federal Register on October 28, 2010 (75 FR 66363).

Note: Applicants in States that are exercising flexibility under the ESEA, as amended by NCLB, in the 2015-16 school year may partner with LEAs to serve students attending priority or focus schools (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 (OESE's) December 18, 2015 Dear Colleague Letter at <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/transition-dcl.pdf>). Applicants in all States should review OESE's January 28, 2016 Dear Colleague Letter at <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/transitionsy1617-dcl.pdf>, for information on interventions required in 2016-2017.

(c) Promise Zones. (0 or 1 point).

This priority is for projects that are designed to serve and coordinate with a federally designated Promise Zone.

Note: As a participant in the Administration's Promise Zones Initiative, the Department is cooperating with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Department of Agriculture (USDA), and nine other Federal agencies to support comprehensive revitalization efforts in 20 high-poverty urban, rural, and tribal communities across the country. Each application for Replication and Expansion grant funds that is accompanied by a Certification of Consistency with Promise Zone Goals and Implementation (HUD Form 50153), signed by an authorized representative of the lead organization of a Promise Zone designated by HUD or USDA supporting the application, will meet this priority. To view the list of designated Promise Zones and lead organizations please go to www.hud.gov/promisezones. The certification form is available at https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=HUD_Form_50153.pdf.

Strengths:

The applicant responded to element (b) School Improvement. The planned IDEA school in Baton Rouge, LA will serve students that are currently likely attending poor performing schools, as 27 of the state's 200+ Focus or Priority are in Baton Rouge and 60.7% of Baton Rouge students currently attend a school rated C, D, or F. Percentages are higher for minorities, as 70% of minority students attend a C, D, or F school, while nearly 80% of white students attend an A or B

school (page 4).

The public school district of East Baton Rouge Parish has approved IDEA's Baton Rouge charter application (Appendix E). Thus, IDEA is partnering with East Baton Rouge Parish Schools to improve educational outcomes—including student achievement, student persistence, high school graduation rates, and college preparation, matriculation, and success—for students attending schools in need of improvement in Baton Rouge (page 4).

IDEA is in process of structuring a formal partnership with El Paso school district, as there are a large number of schools designated as Priority or Focus Schools by the Texas Education Agency in this area (page 5).

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.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found. The applicant did not write to subsection (a) or (c) of this Competitive Priority.

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: 4

Competitive Preference Priority - Promoting Diversity

1. This priority is for applicants that demonstrate a record of (in the schools they currently operate or manage), as well as an intent to continue (in schools that they will be creating or substantially expanding (as defined in this notice) under this grant), taking active measures to --

- (a) Promote student diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, or avoid racial isolation;
- (b) Serve students with disabilities at a rate that is at least comparable to the rate at which these students are served in public schools in the surrounding area; and
- (c) Serve English learners at a rate that is at least comparable to the rate at which these students are served in public schools in the surrounding area.

In support of this priority, applicants must provide enrollment data as well as descriptions of existing policies and activities undertaken or planned to be undertaken.

Note: An applicant addressing Competitive Preference Priority 2 is invited to discuss how the proposed design of its project will encourage approaches by charter schools that help bring together students of different backgrounds, including students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, to attain the benefits that flow from a diverse student body. The applicant should discuss in its application how it would ensure that those approaches are permissible under current law.

Strengths:

The student population across all IDEA schools is 95% Hispanic, 1.2% African American, 2.5% white, and 1.3% other races and ethnicities. The schools have open enrollment policies, and are representative of the local communities (page 5).

The applicant demonstrates their record of promoting diversity by providing examples of their existing schools that are less segregated than traditional district schools (pages 6 and 7). Further, the applicant's Desegregation Plan (Appendix H2) thoroughly describes the active measures they are taking to promote diversity, including students of different racial/ethnic backgrounds, students with disabilities and ELL students. The plan includes specific goals and tactics, as well as monitoring and compliance. The applicant also describes activities to promote staff diversity (page 7 and Appendix

H2).

The applicant explains activities undertaken to recruit students from all communities by advertising with culturally specific media outlets (such as radio stations with large African American audiences) and by holding awareness and recruitment events in all socioeconomic neighborhoods of the city—all without giving admission preference to students of any particular race, ethnicity, or economic background (page 6).

Although IDEA's overall special education student population is 4.7%, and the State average is 8.5%, the applicant explains that 1) the rate of special education enrollment has been increasing substantially due to measures they have taken (page 8), and 2) the lower rate may be explained by early intervention in pre-K – making it less likely that students will be identified as in need of special education services (page 8). The applicant further justifies this by clearly describing the instructional methods (including Direct Instruction) that are used in the early grades that assist students in mastering foundational skills, and provides clear information on how special education students are serviced throughout the educational years – including inclusion wherever possible, as well as life skills and a content mastery approach.

34.8% of IDEA students are English language learners. This is 91% higher than the state average (page 8). The applicant explains how they individualize instruction for Special and Bilingual students on pages 26-27, and stresses that students with disabilities and ELL are educated within an inclusive environment. Pages e194-195 describe the organization's practices working with ELL students, including having certified bilingual staff, working with parents, having an extended school day and year, and including "migrant experiences as a vital part of our campus identity" (page e194). The data show continuously increasing college matriculation rates for ELL student (from 76.9% in 2013, to 84.6% in 2014, to 95% in 2015) on page e35.

The applicant provides comparative statistics to demonstrate evidence of diverse populations served on page 9.

The applicant also notes that new schools will be strategically located in areas that can attract students from diverse and mixed neighborhoods (pages 6 and 7).

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.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

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: 3

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/29/2016 09:40 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/01/2016 05:28 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: IDEA Public Schools (U282M160009)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Eligible Applicant		
1. Quality of Applicant	50	50
Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students		
1. Disadvantaged Students	10	10
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1. Project Design	10	9
Quality of the Management Plan & Personnel		
1. Management Plan/Personnel	20	20
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1. Project Evaluation	10	9
Sub Total	100	98
Priority Questions		
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1. CPP 1	5	4
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Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - Charter Management Organization - 5: 84.282M

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: IDEA Public Schools (U282M160009)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Eligible Applicant

1. In determining the quality of the applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors--

Reader's Score: 50

Sub Question

1. The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement and attainment for all students, including, as applicable, educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (20 points).

Strengths:

100% of IDEA economically/educationally disadvantaged students received college acceptance over 10 years (e24). Additionally, page e503 provides data from the Washington Post outlining that the IDEA school is ranked as the top 115 of Most Challenging High Schools. Specifically, the state is ranked 37th most challenging, the surrounding district as 11th, and IDEA as the 7th most challenging comparatively.

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.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 20

2. (i) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in closing historic achievement gaps for the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant, or

(ii) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which there have not been significant achievement gaps between any of the subgroups of students described in section 1111 (b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant and to which significant gains in student academic achievement have been made with all populations of students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (15 points).

Strengths:

100% of IDEA students received college acceptance over 10 years (e24). Students attending IDEA tend to outperform their peers in the state. For example, for grade four, 79% of students outperformed the state in reading

Sub Question

and 93% of 8th grade students outperformed the state comparatively (e30). Appendix F provides detail on students over three years consistently outperforming state averages with subgroups such as African American, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged.

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.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 15

- 3. The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has achieved results (including performance on statewide tests, annual student attendance and retention rates, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates where applicable and available) for low-income and other educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant that are significantly above the average academic achievement results for such students in the State (15 points).**

Strengths:

100% of IDEA students received college acceptance over 10 years (e24). IDEA student attendance rates outperformed the state with each year represented (e31). For example, attendance for the school from 2012-16 indicates attendance rates from 97% to 98% while the state reflects around 95% (e32). The attendance rate was consistently high for each subgroup the school serves such as low-income, ELL, and SWD. When tracking the four indices (Student attendance, student progress, closing performance gaps, and postsecondary readiness) for the state, IDEA outperformed the state in each area and significantly surpassed the score targeted (e31).

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.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students

- 1. The contribution the proposed project will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged students served by the applicant to meet or exceed State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards, and to graduate college- and career-ready. When responding to this selection criterion, applicants must discuss the proposed locations of schools to be created or substantially expanded and the student populations to be served.**

Note: The Secretary encourages applicants to describe their prior success in improving educational achievement and outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and English learners. In addition, the Secretary encourages applicants to address how they will ensure that all eligible students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education and how the proposed project will assist educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and English learners, in mastering State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.

Strengths:

IDEA serves a diverse student population. 89.1% is low income, 34.8% are English language learners, and 49.3% at risk of dropping out (e39). The applicant seeks to strategically place its schools in low income communities to address the needs of the student populations it has historically served (e39). Appendix H3 provides specific information on how IDEA determines its school locations. For example, the plan details looking for 5 specific criteria to determine if the location is the best fit for its mission and the proposed community (e418 – Appendix H).

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.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified, measurable, and attainable. Applicants proposing to open schools serving substantially different populations than those currently served by the model for which they have demonstrated evidence of success must address the attainability of outcomes given this difference.**

Strengths:

Approximately 49% of students attending IDEA are identified as at-risk of dropping out of school (e39). 90% of students attending IDEA attend 4 year institutions, while the remaining 10% enroll in 2 year institutions (e48). The college rate at IDEA exceeds those of other prestigious networks and the nation comparatively (e48). For example, the nationwide graduation rate is 64% while IDEA's graduation rate is 92%.

IDEA focuses on 3 core goals to replicate/expand its network (e52). Each core goal area tracked by the organization annually (e53).

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.

Weaknesses:

While IDEA focuses on 3 specific core goals (e52-e53), those goals are tracked but there are no clear specific targets to measure success outside of performing better than the state or district.

Reader's Score: 9

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan & Personnel

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel to replicate and substantially expand high-quality charter schools (as defined in this notice). In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers-

Reader's Score: 20

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 (4 points).**

Strengths:

The applicant provides a timeline to monitor its progress broken down into quarters to monitor progress (e40-e41). Additionally, the same chart outlines the responsible person(s) responsible for monitoring a particular component of the plan. (e40-e41). The plan developed uses teams to support each component of the timeline to achieve the desired milestones (e43).

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.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

- 2. The business plan for improving, sustaining, and ensuring the quality and performance of charter schools created or substantially expanded under these grants beyond the initial period of Federal funding in areas including, but not limited to, facilities, financial management, central office, student academic achievement, governance, oversight, and human resources of the charter schools (4 points).**

Strengths:

To maximize human resources, IDEA provides start up services to each new school, finds a designated leader for the school, ongoing academic/financial/operational support, and ensures appropriate governance and oversight of each school (e58-e67). Within each of these areas there are experienced staff to ensure consistency with implementation at each stage to promote quality. (e58-e67). School leadership works to monitor student progress by administering school based assessments and providing feedback on instructional practices (e62).

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.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

- 3. A multi-year financial and operating model for the organization, a demonstrated commitment of current and future partners, and evidence of broad support from stakeholders critical to the project's long-term success (4 points).**

Sub Question

Strengths:

IDEA has support from various stakeholders due to outperforming its state academically over the years (e67). For example, Appendix G and H1 provide numerous highlights for the school and its confirmed partnerships. Some of the names supporting the school and providing lifetime gifts of substantial amounts include Texas Education Agency, the Charter School Growth Fund and The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (e67). Schools within the network have proven results of financial solvency after its third year of operation (e66).

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.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

4. The plan for closing charter schools supported, overseen, or managed by the applicant that do not meet high standards of quality (2 points).

Strengths:

IDEA has experience turning around low performing schools (e68-e69). The school's closure plan first employs its proven turnaround techniques (e68). A school in the network (Frontier) used the techniques and is now categorized as one of the highest performing schools in the network and ranked the 15th best high school in Texas (e69). Schools not meeting expectations upon the model being implemented will be closed (e69).

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.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

5. 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 (6 points).

Strengths:

The applicant provided resumes and job descriptions for specific positions (e71). For example, Appendix B outlines the job description for the Executive Director and the corresponding resume. Each person demonstrates appropriate education and experience to ensure the success of the project of the proposed scope and size (Appendix B). The Chief Operating Officer of the school has specific financial experience with GMAC Financial (e94). Additionally, the Chief Human Assets Officer has experience with a national charter authorizing group (NACSA) to provide valuable expertise on the governance, operations, and finance best practices for a charter school (e97).

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.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 6

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Evaluation

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project.**

Strengths:

There is a plan to hire quantitative and qualitative experts to help IDEA determine if its expansion priorities are successful (e72). An independent firm was hired to evaluate the CSP grant effectiveness (e72). Having independent evaluators will provide non-biased information about the implantation of the proposed plan.

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.

Weaknesses:

Applicant's plan does not detail an evaluation plan exclusive of bias as all parties will be employed by IDEA and will conduct the quantitative and qualitative analyses (e69). Employing an independent evaluation into this plan would decrease bias.

Reader's Score: 9

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Supporting High-Need Students

- 1. This priority is for projects that will serve high-need students through one of the methods described below. An application may receive points for only one of the three parts of Competitive Preference Priority 1, and should specify which part it is addressing. If an applicant addresses more than one part of Competitive Preference Priority 1 and does not specify whether it is addressing part (a), (b), or (c), the application will be awarded priority points only for the part addressed in the application that has the highest maximum potential point value, regardless of the number of priority points the application is awarded for that particular part of Competitive Preference Priority 1.**

This priority is for projects that will serve high-need students through element (a), (b) or (c) as described below:

(a) Supporting High Need Students. (0 or 5 points).

Projects that are designed to improve academic outcomes, learning environments, or both, for students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes.

(b) School Improvement. (0 or 4 points).

To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that its proposed replication or expansion of one or more high-quality charter schools (as defined in this notice) will occur in partnership with, and will be designed to assist, one or more LEAs in implementing academic or structural interventions to serve students attending schools that have been identified for improvement, corrective action, closure, or restructuring under section 1116 of the ESEA, and as described in the notice of final requirements for School Improvement Grants, published in the Federal Register on October 28, 2010 (75 FR 66363).

Note: Applicants in States that are exercising flexibility under the ESEA, as amended by NCLB, in the 2015-16 school year may partner with LEAs to serve students attending priority or focus schools (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 (OESE's) December 18, 2015 Dear Colleague Letter at <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/transition-dcl.pdf>). Applicants in all States should review OESE's January 28, 2016 Dear Colleague Letter at <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/transitionsy1617-dcl.pdf>, for information on interventions required in 2016-2017.

(c) Promise Zones. (0 or 1 point).

This priority is for projects that are designed to serve and coordinate with a federally designated Promise Zone.

Note: As a participant in the Administration's Promise Zones Initiative, the Department is cooperating with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Department of Agriculture (USDA), and nine other Federal agencies to support comprehensive revitalization efforts in 20 high-poverty urban, rural, and tribal communities across the country. Each application for Replication and Expansion grant funds that is accompanied by a Certification of Consistency with Promise Zone Goals and Implementation (HUD Form 50153), signed by an authorized representative of the lead organization of a Promise Zone designated by HUD or USDA supporting the application, will meet this priority. To view the list of designated Promise Zones and lead organizations please go to www.hud.gov/promisезones. The certification form is available at https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=HUD_Form_50153.pdf.

Strengths:

IDEA will expand 2 schools in San Antonio and replicate 16 schools in El Paso and Baton Rouge (e17). Additionally, there is a partnership with a school district in Baton Rouge to specifically improve priority and focus schools. The priority and focus schools are schools needing improvement (e18).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

Competitive Preference Priority - Promoting Diversity

1. This priority is for applicants that demonstrate a record of (in the schools they currently operate or manage), as well as an intent to continue (in schools that they will be creating or substantially expanding (as defined in this notice) under this grant), taking active measures to --

- (a) Promote student diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, or avoid racial isolation;**
- (b) Serve students with disabilities at a rate that is at least comparable to the rate at which these students are served in public schools in the surrounding area; and**
- (c) Serve English learners at a rate that is at least comparable to the rate at which these students are served in public schools in the surrounding area.**

In support of this priority, applicants must provide enrollment data as well as descriptions of existing policies and activities undertaken or planned to be undertaken.

Note: An applicant addressing Competitive Preference Priority 2 is invited to discuss how the proposed design of its project will encourage approaches by charter schools that help bring together students of different backgrounds, including students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, to attain the benefits that flow from a diverse student body. The applicant should discuss in its application how it would ensure that those approaches are permissible under current law.

Strengths:

IDEA currently has at least one school which is meeting the needs of diverse students. For example, the network currently serves an economically disadvantaged student population of 89.1% (e18). IDEA plans to serve additional high needs and low-income student over the next five years increasing from 23,387 to 66,789 (e18-19). The school's plan includes locating itself in areas to attract its targeted racially and diverse student populations (e21). To address its SWD population IDEA currently practices an inclusion model to help meet the goals outlined in a child's IEP (e22). IDEA currently serves 6 specific categories of students (89.1 - Low-Income, 34.8 - ELL, 4.7 - SWD, 1.2 - African American, 95.0 - Hispanic, and 2.5 - White) (e24). The school is serving ELL at a rate comparable to its surrounding districts and to the state (e24).

Weaknesses:

IDEA as a network currently serves Special Education Students at 4.7% which is lower than the surrounding region which reflects 7.3%, 9.3%, and 9.5% in RGV, Austin, and San Antonio respectively (p. e24).

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/01/2016 05:28 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/02/2016 12:18 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: IDEA Public Schools (U282M160009)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Eligible Applicant		
1. Quality of Applicant	50	42
Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students		
1. Disadvantaged Students	10	7
Quality of the Project Design		
1. Project Design	10	10
Quality of the Management Plan & Personnel		
1. Management Plan/Personnel	20	18
Quality of Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	10	10
Sub Total	100	87
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Supporting High-Need Students		
1. CPP 1	5	4
Promoting Diversity		
1. CPP 2	3	0
Sub Total	8	4
Total	108	91

Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - Charter Management Organization - 5: 84.282M

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: IDEA Public Schools (U282M160009)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Eligible Applicant

1. In determining the quality of the applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors--

Reader's Score: 42

Sub Question

1. The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement and attainment for all students, including, as applicable, educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (20 points).

Strengths:

Based on the reports of 4th and 8th grade students tested on STAAR (the state assessment), the percent of IDEA students passing all subjects as well as the high school graduation rate is consistently higher than the state average for the past three years (pp. e31-32). This serves as evidence that IDEA has demonstrated its success in increasing student achievement.

Weaknesses:

Even though the overall percent of IDEA students passing on the state assessment is higher than the state average for the past three years, disaggregated data indicated otherwise. For example, in the regions of RGV and San Antonio, the percent of student passing was below the state average for each of the past three years. On all subjects, 81% of IDEA student passed in 2013, 82% passed in 2014, and 83% passed in 2014. The increase was minimal (p.e31), which does not meet the criterion element requirement of demonstrating significant increase of student achievement.

Although the overall percent of high school graduation is consistently higher than the state average for the past three years, subgroups data demonstrated otherwise. For example, the graduation rate of ELL in 2013 was 96.3%, decreased to 93% in 2014, and climbed back to 97% in 2015. Based on the Class 2014 reports, on AP/IB results, the percent of all IDEA students performed at or above criterion was below the state average; on ACT average composite scores, all IDEA students obtained 19.1 compared to the state average of 20.6 (p.e30). No ACT, AP/IB data are evident for the other years. All data presented in the application indicated inconsistency in securing a significant increase in student academic achievement for the past three years per the criterion element requirement.

Reader's Score: 15

2. (i) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in closing historic achievement gaps for the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant, or

Sub Question

(ii) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which there have not been significant achievement gaps between any of the subgroups of students described in section 1111 (b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant and to which significant gains in student academic achievement have been made with all populations of students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (15 points).

Strengths:

The applicant provided convincing evidence that based on the reports of 4th and 8th grade students tested on STAAR (the state assessment), the percent of IDEA students passing all subjects is consistently higher than the state average for the past three years (pp. e31-32).

Weaknesses:

Though the applicant provided evidence that the percent of IDEA students passing the state assessment is higher than the state average, the applicant did not discuss the existence of gaps nor demonstrating in closing achievement gaps. The gaps must be presented in order to close it. Without the baseline data of student performance and their academic growth, it is questionable whether the applicant has obtained satisfactory outcomes in closing historic achievement gaps.

Furthermore, in analyzing the submitted IDEA and state performance data reports (pp. e373-393), the subgroups student at IDEA meeting satisfactory and above on the state assessment are as follows: White – 89%, 88% and 90% vs. African American – 74%, 77%, and 71% in 2015, 2014, and 2013 respectively (p. e377 & e380). The success in closing the gap between White and African American students was inconsistent per data presented. Here is another example of the subgroups student performance on the state assessment: Sped. students – 47%, 82%, 71% vs. all students – 83%, 82%, and 81% in 2015, 2014, and 2013 respectively (p. e377 & e380). The gap between students with disabilities and all students increased significantly from 2014 to 2015. The above data indicated the IDEA's efforts in closing the historical achievement gaps have been inconsistent for the past three years.

Reader's Score: 12

- 3. The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has achieved results (including performance on statewide tests, annual student attendance and retention rates, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates where applicable and available) for low-income and other educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant that are significantly above the average academic achievement results for such students in the State (15 points).**

Strengths:

With the fact that 89.1% of student population IDEA serves is economically disadvantaged, the applicant provided solid data to demonstrate its consistency in achieving satisfactory results. For the past three years, low-income students obtained a higher percentage passing on state assessment as well as higher rates in attendance, retention, and high school graduation compared to the state average respectively (pp.e31-32). Thirty-five percent of all IDEA alumni complete a college degree within six years of enrollment, compared to only 22% in TX and 8% of low-income students nationally (p. e38). Those satisfactory results served as evidence to demonstrate the applicant's success in increasing the academic performance for low-income students at IDEA.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students

- 1. The contribution the proposed project will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged students served by the applicant to meet or exceed State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards, and to graduate college- and career-ready. When responding to this selection criterion, applicants must discuss the proposed locations of schools to be created or substantially expanded and the student populations to be served.**

Note: The Secretary encourages applicants to describe their prior success in improving educational achievement and outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and English learners. In addition, the Secretary encourages applicants to address how they will ensure that all eligible students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education and how the proposed project will assist educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and English learners, in mastering State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.

Strengths:

The applicant demonstrated its efforts in enrolling educationally disadvantaged students evident that 89.1% of IDEA students are from low-income communities and 34.8% are ELLs (p. e41). To demonstrate IDEA student college and career readiness, the applicant provided supporting data that, for the current year, 38% of IDEA seniors were accepted in colleges and universities (p. e42). IDEA focuses on individualized instruction along with intervention programs and college counseling to assisting educationally disadvantaged students in meeting the standards.

Weaknesses:

Based on the 2015 performance data (p.e36-37), educationally disadvantaged students consisting of economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and ELLs, outperformed the state average on all subjects; however, data or information to demonstrate "improving" their achievement are not evident with the absence of baseline performance data. Though the applicant discussed extensively to enroll educationally disadvantaged students, limited descriptions were presented to demonstrate the "how" that the project assists the target group of students in meeting the academic standards.

Distributing information of district special education program and IMPACT magazines is important (p. e40), it does not address the strategies of delivering academic core. The applicant proposed only individualized instruction for students with disabilities and ELLs, but details of the approach has been left out. The strategies of individualized instruction and intervention programs can be elaborated to provide a clear understanding of the implementation and impact of these approaches. In addition, it is stated that the Critical Student Intervention program can help new 6th graders including those with IEPs to gain as much as two years of academic growth per year, but no solid data are provided to support the claim (p. e42).

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified, measurable, and attainable. Applicants proposing to open schools serving substantially different populations than those currently served by the model for which they have demonstrated evidence of success must address the attainability of outcomes given this difference.**

Strengths:

The applicant provided detailed explanations about the academic programs to be implemented systematically. The program is comprehensive with scope and sequence (pp. e45-51). Three goals including objectives are clearly specified, which are measurable and attainable (p.e53). The logic model is evident (p. e433) and displays the clearly defined

resources, outputs, outcomes and long term goals. The applicant listed three goals to achieve which are aligned with the IDEA mission (p. e52). Under each goal, the targets are clearly defined and will be tracked by the senior leadership team over the five-year project period (p. e52). The targets and performance measures listed for each year over the five-year period are realistic and achievable based on the past successful experience of IDEA in replicating and expanding schools. With the strong project design, the applicant is likely to achieve the desired outcomes.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan & Personnel

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel to replicate and substantially expand high-quality charter schools (as defined in this notice). In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers-

Reader's Score: 18

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 (4 points).**

Strengths:

The applicant proposed a management plan listing activities and milestones to be accomplished (pp. e55-57). Person responsible for each activity is also presented as well as the quarterly timeline (pp. e55-57).

Weaknesses:

The applicant failed to provide a sound management plan to achieve the project of two expansion schools and 16 replication schools. It is stated that "the following table illustrates the key program activities, responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for this CSP project..." (p. e54). The project the CMO proposed should be the expansion and replication of IDEA schools not administering the CSP grant project (pp. e55-57). Though the project design provided clearly defined objectives, the activities in the management plan are not well aligned with the proposed objectives. The milestones presented are general and vague, which are listed more as "to-do" items instead of marks of accomplishment.

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: 2

- 2. The business plan for improving, sustaining, and ensuring the quality and performance of charter schools created or substantially expanded under these grants beyond the initial period of Federal funding in areas including, but not limited to, facilities, financial management, central office, student academic achievement, governance, oversight, and human resources of the charter schools (4 points).**

Sub Question

Strengths:

The business plan proposed is comprehensive and strategically sound. The CMO provides start-up services for new schools including facilities acquisition, leadership and instructional team development, academic and operational support, financial support and oversight, and effective governance and oversight to ensure smooth launch of new schools (pp. e57-66)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

- 3. A multi-year financial and operating model for the organization, a demonstrated commitment of current and future partners, and evidence of broad support from stakeholders critical to the project's long-term success (4 points).**

Strengths:

The applicant provided a detailed multi-year budget proposal with year by year project cost (p. e519). In demonstrating commitment of current and future partners, the applicant listed grants and funds obtained as well as letters of support and funds raised from communities in El Paso and Baton Rouge (p.e67).

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 4

- 4. The plan for closing charter schools supported, overseen, or managed by the applicant that do not meet high standards of quality (2 points).**

Strengths:

The applicant proposed a sound plan for closing charter schools managed by the applicant that do not meet high standards of quality. The applicant conducts needs assessment and implements a campus improvement plan if necessary. Using IDEA Frontier as an example, the applicant described the process of overseeing the performance of Frontier and providing support to turn it around (p. e68-69).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

- 5. 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 (6 points).**

Strengths:

The job description of the project director is included in the application. Responsibilities are clearly defined. The resumes of key personnel are evident in the application (pp. e82-112). The key leaders are highly qualified with extensive expertise in launching successful charter schools. With the past successful experience in replicating and expanding IDEA schools, the applicant is likely to manage the size and scope of this proposed project.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 6

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Evaluation

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project.**

Strengths:

The applicant proposed a well-developed research plan using mixed methods to capture qualitative and quantitative data to measure the progress and outcomes of the project. Research questions are included in the application to guide the research. Data will be collected from site visit observations, interviews, surveys, and student academic performance. These approaches serve as evidence of a quality project evaluation plan (pp. e71-75).

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Supporting High-Need Students

- 1. This priority is for projects that will serve high-need students through one of the methods described below. An application may receive points for only one of the three parts of Competitive Preference Priority 1, and should specify which part it is addressing. If an applicant addresses more than one part of Competitive Preference Priority 1 and does not specify whether it is addressing part (a), (b), or (c), the application will be awarded priority points only for the part addressed in the application that has the highest maximum potential point value, regardless of the number of priority points the application is awarded for that particular part of Competitive Preference Priority 1.**

This priority is for projects that will serve high-need students through element (a), (b) or (c) as described below:

(a) Supporting High Need Students. (0 or 5 points).

Projects that are designed to improve academic outcomes, learning environments, or both, for students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes.

(b) School Improvement. (0 or 4 points).

To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that its proposed replication or expansion of one or more high-quality charter schools (as defined in this notice) will occur in partnership with, and will be designed to assist, one or more LEAs in implementing academic or structural interventions to serve students attending schools that have been identified for improvement, corrective action, closure, or restructuring under section 1116 of the ESEA, and as described in the notice of final requirements for School Improvement Grants, published in the Federal Register on October 28, 2010 (75 FR 66363).

Note: Applicants in States that are exercising flexibility under the ESEA, as amended by NCLB, in the 2015-16 school year may partner with LEAs to serve students attending priority or focus schools (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 (OESE's) December 18, 2015 Dear Colleague Letter at <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/transition-dcl.pdf>. Applicants in all States should review OESE's January 28, 2016 Dear Colleague Letter at <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/transitionsy1617-dcl.pdf>, for information on interventions required in 2016-2017.

(c) Promise Zones. (0 or 1 point).

This priority is for projects that are designed to serve and coordinate with a federally designated Promise Zone.

Note: As a participant in the Administration's Promise Zones Initiative, the Department is cooperating with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Department of Agriculture (USDA), and nine other Federal agencies to support comprehensive revitalization efforts in 20 high-poverty urban, rural, and tribal communities across the country. Each application for Replication and Expansion grant funds that is accompanied by a Certification of Consistency with Promise Zone Goals and Implementation (HUD Form 50153), signed by an authorized representative of the lead organization of a Promise Zone designated by HUD or USDA supporting the application, will meet this priority. To view the list of designated Promise Zones and lead organizations please go to www.hud.gov/promisezones. The certification form is available at https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=HUD_Form_50153.pdf.

Strengths:

(b)

The applicant proposed to expand two schools and replicate 16 schools in TX and Baton Rouge, LA. It is evident in the application that the applicant, IDEA is "partnering with East Baton Rouge Parish Schools to improve educational outcomes", where 27 of the state's Priority schools are located (p.e19). In addition, the East Baton Rouge Parish school district approved IDEA's charter application in May allowing IDEA to replicate its academic model in the city. The applicant included a statement from Baton Rouge district explaining its partnership with IDEA (p. e19). In addition, the applicant proposed to replicate schools in El Paso community within two school districts that recently have been rated as Priority schools by the Texas Education Agency. The dialogues of partnership have occurred between the two parties (p. e20). The applicant demonstrated its partnership with the LEAs in implementing promising models to increase the student academic achievement in the target area.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

Competitive Preference Priority - Promoting Diversity

1. This priority is for applicants that demonstrate a record of (in the schools they currently operate or manage), as well as an intent to continue (in schools that they will be creating or substantially expanding (as defined in this notice) under this grant), taking active measures to --

- (a) Promote student diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, or avoid racial isolation;
- (b) Serve students with disabilities at a rate that is at least comparable to the rate at which these students are served in public schools in the surrounding area; and
- (c) Serve English learners at a rate that is at least comparable to the rate at which these students are served in public schools in the surrounding area.

In support of this priority, applicants must provide enrollment data as well as descriptions of existing policies and activities undertaken or planned to be undertaken.

Note: An applicant addressing Competitive Preference Priority 2 is invited to discuss how the proposed

design of its project will encourage approaches by charter schools that help bring together students of different backgrounds, including students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, to attain the benefits that flow from a diverse student body. The applicant should discuss in its application how it would ensure that those approaches are permissible under current law.

Strengths:

No strengths noted.

Weaknesses:

IDEA currently serves 4.7% of Special Education students, which is below the rate of these students served in the regions that IDEA serves with 7.3%, 9.3%, and 9.5% in RGV, Austin, and San Antonio respectively. It is also below the state average of 8.5% (p. e24).

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

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