

**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: Propel Schools Foundation (U282M160028)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Eligible Applicant		
1. Quality of Applicant	50	45
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
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Supporting High-Need Students		
1. CPP 1	5	0
Promoting Diversity		
1. CPP 2	3	3
Total	108	93

Technical Review Form

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

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Propel Schools Foundation (U282M160028)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Eligible Applicant

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

Reader's Score: 45

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:

The applicant clearly demonstrates that students at Propel outperform students at resident districts in both ELA and Math for three consistent years. This includes districts that have fewer economically disadvantaged students (page 7). The data show that Propel not only beats the average of the school districts, but beats each and every school district each of the three school years, on both Math and ELA. Table 2 on pages 8-9 (e24-5) demonstrates Propel's superior results with African American and Economically Disadvantaged students at PSSA compared to similar students in resident district schools, as well as statewide. The data show that Propel both significantly and consistently outperforms the local options students have, both overall and for educationally disadvantaged students.

A great deal of comparative school performance data for 2012-2013, 2013-2014 and 2014-2015, for each Propel school, for All Students, African American students, Economically Disadvantaged students, and Special education students (on the last page) was found on e126-e138.

Weaknesses:

The NWEA/MAP data on page 10 (e26) could have been better explained (e.g., how these numbers illustrate student academic growth). And, there were cases (Tables 1, 2, and 3 on pages 7-8 or e23-24) where proficiency or better rates slightly decreased from the 2012-2013 to the 2013-2014 school years.

Reader's Score: 18

2.

Sub Question

Strengths:

The applicant indicates that they are responding to subsection (ii) of this criteria. However, their response also addresses subsection (i).

The applicant clearly demonstrates that African American students are excelling at their schools. Proficiency rates for Propel's African American students exceeded the statewide African American student math and ELA rates by 7 points and 15 points, respectively (pages 10-11, or e26-27). Tables 5 and 6 on pages 11-12 (e27-8) demonstrate that Propel's African American students exceeded proficiency rates when compared to African American students in the state, at every grade level tested, for both Math and ELA, during the past three school years, consistently.

Similarly, economically disadvantaged students at Propel outperform economically disadvantaged students statewide, in both reading and math, for three consecutive years, across grade levels (pages 12-13 or e28-29 and Tables 7 and 8).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not display data that clearly showed how historically underserved subgroups at their schools compare to students that are not historically underserved (white, non-economically disadvantaged) either within the school to allow analysis of within school gaps, or compared to the state. This information would have been helpful to thoroughly assess this criteria.

Reader's Score: 13

3.

Strengths:

The applicant clearly demonstrates that their students – which are more economically disadvantaged and more likely to be minorities – achieve at higher levels - an average of 20 percentage points - than similar students in nearby districts and across the state (pages 14-17 or e30-33). At the more established school, the outperformance rate is nearly double (page 16 or e32).

Three-year attendance, attrition, high school graduation and college attendance rates (where available) are included in Table 11 (page 57 or e73) and Table 12 (page 59 or e75).

Weaknesses:

The applicant could have done a better job explaining their attendance, retention, high school graduation and college attendance rates. For example, including statewide statistics or other data points for retention and college attendance would have been helpful to analyze how Propel schools compare.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 14

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 clearly explains how the project will contribute to assisting a greater number of educationally disadvantaged students meet or exceed State academic content and achievement standards. The expansion of one school and creating a high school to expand grade levels for another is well explained, with strong attention to the specific needs of the community and students. The locations and student populations to be served are clearly described.

The applicant describes the responsibilities of the Beyond Propel Coordinator, to support students in transitions to college and career (page 19).

Weaknesses:

The applicant needed to provide more information on their prior success serving students with disabilities and English learners.

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:

Propel's first school opened in 2003 with 170 children occupying a small hospital basement. As of 2016, more than 3,600 K-12 students are educated at one of eight economically disadvantaged locations in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania (page 1). This evidences that the CMO has successfully grown their schools and capacity to manage growth while delivering ever increasing high quality academic programming.

This project is for the expansion of Propel Montour and Propel Northside, two existing Propel K-8 schools (by adding grade level classrooms to existing schools), and opening a high school.

The applicant describes how their expansion is a response to a different community with different needs – e.g. high school (page 18). There will be a “Beyond Propel” Coordinator to assist students with college, workplace, certificate and vocational school placement and college persistence (page 19).

The applicant very clearly describes the project design, including the locations of the schools to be expanded (pages 20-21). The applicant describes how classes and grade levels will be added, structuring the expansion over four years (page 21). The charter authorizer – Montour Area School District, has approved the contract (page 21).

The goals, objectives and outcomes of the project are presented on pages 24-25. The goals are specific, measurable, and very likely attainable considering the CMO's past performance. Pages 36-37 (or e52-53) also provide Replication and Expansion Objectives, with clear outcome and progress measures. The progress measures are rigorous and directly related to directly related to the objectives.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

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 provides a detailed project timeline, listing the activities, person responsible, and timeline for each task (pages 23-24). The timeline displays a good understanding of necessary school start-up activities. All new schools are to be opened in the same state.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not indicate the responsible party for project objectives on pages 36-37 (e52-53). It was difficult to evaluate the project budget.

Reader's Score: 3

2.

Sub Question

Strengths:

The applicant describes a good plan for project oversight. The financial and operation appear to be sustainable. A convincing argument is made by pointing out that they have successfully replicated a number of their schools, and will apply the same central management and sharing of best practices in this project. The applicant addresses how the business plan addresses each key area of facilities, financial management, central office, student academic achievement, governance, oversight, and human resources (page 25 or e41).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

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 presents a multi-year financial and operating model for the organization (page 26 or e42). The enrollment projections appear reasonable (growing by 150 – 300 students each year, as shown on page 26). The Network Projection shows a net surplus of \$1,161,624 by FY21 (page 26). All schools appear to be fully enrolled (page e73). In fact, there are 3,000 children and families on Propel's waiting lists, indicating a strong demand for growth (page 2).

The financial audit finds net assets and cash flows were positive (pages e86-87) and there were no financial audit findings (page e101-102).

The applicant is keenly aware of the need for local support, and has deliberate community engagement strategies (pages 48 – 51 or e64-67), such as inviting community leaders to the school, being very transparent, and being visible in the community and through service learning projects (pages 48-49).

There is clear support from stakeholders, including the community and parents. Examples of this are 1) the Pittsburgh School District voted to authorize Propel Northside, 2) the Montour Area School District voted unanimously to approve the expansion of Propel Montour (page 47), 3) parents "played a pivotal role" in planning the expansions of Propel Montour and Northside (page 48), and 4) the application includes letters of support from a Pennsylvania State Senator, the Heinz Endowment fund, and the Benter Foundation (e119-e121).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

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 clearly describes how they will regularly monitor the schools, review student data, regularly meet with staff, and other activities to keep continually informed of school and student progress. Coaching and intervention

Sub Question

will be provided where needed, and teachers that have not met growth expectations have been let go in the past. If a school is struggling, the strategy would be to make staff changes, and if this is unsuccessful, closure will be considered (page 27).

Weaknesses:

The plan for school closure could be more thoroughly addressed. For example, how to notify families, how to transition students, student records, school equipment and materials, etc. could have been described.

Reader's Score: 1

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 Project Leaders not only have experience delivering high quality education to traditionally underserved students, they are experienced with grants management, including a 2010 CSP Replication grant. The Project Director is the Executive Director of Propel Schools Foundation and is a Pahara-Aspen Education Fellow. The Superintendent has been with Propel since 2003.

Senior Leadership have very impressive credentials. The Superintendent earned three EPIC grants from New Leaders for New Schools when principal of Propel McKeesport. The Senior Director of Teacher Residency is an Oberlin graduate, and has a PhD in Organizational Leadership. The Chief Financial Officer has 35 years experience, including with Breakthrough Charter Schools. All staff have a long history with Propel and hold many educational certifications.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

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 RAND Corporation will provide an independent evaluation of the project. RAND has a long history of education evaluation (page 31).

The applicant thoroughly describes the methods and tools of research, including quantitative and qualitative approaches. The central evaluation research question will be determining that factors that enable a successful scaling up without harming existing students. RAND will compare post-expansion outcome measures, parent satisfaction, teacher and student retention, academic proficiency, and other measures (pages 31-36).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

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:

The applicant did not write to this Competitive Priority.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not write to this Competitive Priority.

Reader's Score: 0

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:

Propel has been very purposeful about serving a diverse population. 8 of their 10 schools are diverse by definition of not having any group constitute more than 80% of the student body (page 2). A wide variety of culturally relevant academic and experiential content is offered in the schools to bridge cultural experiences and understandings (e.g., African American drumming, Asian martial arts, traditional musical theater, Civic Light Opera and Hip Hop on Lock – as noted on pages 3 and 4).

The organization locates its schools so that various races/ethnicities can access the school easily (e.g., near diverse communities, and where there is transportation).

The applicant provides race/ethnicity and socioeconomic demographics for the schools (page 4). The applicant indicates how its diversity strategies are supported in law (page 4).

The applicant demonstrates that it serves a comparable rate of special education students. Propels' 16% students with disabilities is higher than the state rate of 15.6%, and close to the district rate of 17.6% (page 5). Both schools have rates within 1.5% of the local school district (page 5).

The applicant explains that there are very low ELL rates in Allegheny County. Propel's rate is .1%, the county's rate is <1% (page 5).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

Reader's Score: 3

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Propel Schools Foundation (U282M160028)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Eligible Applicant		
1. Quality of Applicant	50	36
Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students		
1. Disadvantaged Students	10	6
Quality of the Project Design		
1. Project Design	10	10
Quality of the Management Plan & Personnel		
1. Management Plan/Personnel	20	17
Quality of Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	10	10
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Supporting High-Need Students		
1. CPP 1	5	0
Promoting Diversity		
1. CPP 2	3	0
Total	108	79

Technical Review Form

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

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Propel Schools Foundation (U282M160028)

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: 36

Sub Question

1.

Strengths:

Data provided by the applicant, the Propel Network of combined schools, indicates that they are outperforming surrounding schools (e23). Additionally the combined network academic performance for ELA and Math demonstrate the whole network is outperforming the state; however, many of the resident district schools for each year of data presented demonstrated performance that above where the individual school is located for both economically disadvantaged and African American students.

Weaknesses:

Data provided on page e23 outlining the performance of the Propel Network and the resident district in which the school resides shows mixed performance. For example, in 2012-13 (which was the highest performing year of the network as other performance ranges from 27% to 67% - math) two of the district schools outperformed the school where the student resides in math. Additionally, the ELA scores projected indicate the district schools outperform the Propel Network schools (e23).

Reader's Score: 12

2.

Sub Question

Strengths:

The Propel Network as a whole outperformed the state as evidenced by the grade level breakdown for African American students in ELA and Math (e27-e29). The evidence supports that the network as a whole has an impact on students who are economically disadvantaged, when compared to similar students around the state.

Weaknesses:

The data provides a breakdown of student performance for the network as a whole compared to the state (e27-e29), which makes it difficult to determine the individual school performance in making academic gains for the specific students served.

Reader's Score: 12

3.

Strengths:

As an entire network, Propel is achieving strong academic results with economically disadvantaged students (e29-e33). For example, during the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years the Propel network reflected 67% and 59% proficiency in Math while the statewide proficiency was between 46%-49% comparatively for African American students.

Weaknesses:

The demographic information presented presents the economically disadvantaged student data as a whole network in some places and then as individual schools in other areas. For example, page e30 reports 77% for the network compared to 50% for the state, while the population is representative in 2 of the campuses with 66% and 81% respectively (e20) making it difficult to truly measure the individual school success for the student populations served.

Reader's Score: 12

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:

For the expansion project Propel is requesting for 2 of its schools, one of the schools is 74% African American, where 77% of the students qualify for free and reduced lunch (e35). Propel has employed a Beyond Propel Coordinator to

support students in college as many of the students attending the school are first time graduates (e35). Additionally, math proficiency for three years demonstrates Propel's economically disadvantaged students outperform the state consistently (e33).

Weaknesses:

The plan indicates some persistence in post-secondary (e35); however, no specific data was provided on the outcomes to date to indicate if the program is successful with the population of students served.

Reader's Score: 6

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:

Propel intends to expand 2 of its campuses (e36-e37). The expansion of each project will be gradual to help the network ensure success (e36). Enrollment data projected indicates the network plans to maximize its enrollment to ensure success and not primarily on the requests of parents to fully increase seat capacity for the campuses (e36). The plan for expansion is sequenced and a graph provided by the applicant demonstrates the plan's growth capacity from the first year to capacity post the expansion project (e37). Propel amendment request to expand its charter received a unanimous approval from its authorizer which provides support of the networks prior performance (e37).

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: 17

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).**

Sub Question**Strengths:**

The timeline provided outlined which individuals would be responsible for certain parts of the expansion project (e38-e40). Propel's expansion plan is broken down to convey the activity, responsible parties, and the timeline by quarter to help the network manage its proposed expansion plan (e39-e40).

Weaknesses:

While the timeline provided outlines multiple involvement of the expansion project, the summary information provided outlines 2 individuals will fully oversee the project and the plan lacked specific goals to measure its success (e38-e40).

Reader's Score: 2

2.

Strengths:

Propel has established 10 campuses over the years (e41). Additionally, Propel plans to monitor the expansion projects for the 2 proposed campuses and sustain the organizations academic and financial performance (e41). Future plans include monitoring progress by the board of directors and community members for the operational components (e41). The academic and financial components receive monitoring from the central office staff employed by the network (e41).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

3.

Strengths:

3 specific letters of support were provided in Appendix C to demonstrate support from stakeholders. Financial statements for the Propel Network and its audited statements demonstrate financial viability (e81-e105). The financial plan outlined the network's financial plans over 5 years without deficits (e42).

Weaknesses:

No Weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

4.

Strengths:

A brief description was provided on (e43) outlining what the school plans to do to prevent closure. For example, there is a detail provided that the school will consistently communicate with its parents, have regular meetings with teachers, and conduct rigorous reviews of student assessments to prevent school closure (e43).

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No actual plan was outlined to outline a plan for closing the school (e43).

Reader's Score: 1

5.

Strengths:

Many individuals involved with Propel demonstrate tenure and qualifications at the network, as well as experience delivering outcomes for its established schools (e43-e47 & e106-e118).

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:

Pages e52-e53 outlines the progress measures established by Propel. A majority of the progress measures are specific to the intended outcomes of the project and seem rigorous. For example, on page e53, student performance for existing students and those new to the program is outlined in detail. Additionally, each project objective has a corresponding outcome which is measured to ensure success (e52-e53). Different individuals/groups have a responsibility to oversee specific components of the plan to monitor progress of each objective (e54-e58).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses 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:

No strengths noted.

Weaknesses:

Across its network 77% of its students are eligible for FRL, 75% minority, and 16% have special needs. These numbers differ across the network depending on the specific school location (e20). The FRL rate at each of the schools in the Propel network vary drastically making it difficult to determine if the schools are meeting the needs of FRL students or if the performance of the FRL students is camouflaged by the performance of those students who do not meet the criteria of economically disadvantaged. 2 of the Propel campuses report economically disadvantaged rates above 60% (e20). 8 of 10 of Propel campuses reflect an overall African American body of 65% while the remaining 35% are white (E18). Applicant did not write to this priority.

Reader's Score: 0

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:

The applicant does not provide significant evidence of serving English language learners populations at the same rate as all its surrounding schools. E21 indicates the English language learners population is 1% while one other county is reflected at 3.1% comparatively. No data was specifically provided about the performance of SWD and economically disadvantaged students to demonstrate the school's success with the population of students. Diversity of the schools is reflected through the Pennsylvania Law which provides transportation to students and not through the strategic marketing efforts of the school (e20).

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/03/2016 01:48 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/02/2016 12:22 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Propel Schools Foundation (U282M160028)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Eligible Applicant		
1. Quality of Applicant	50	35
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	15
Quality of Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	10	10
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Supporting High-Need Students		
1. CPP 1	5	0
Promoting Diversity		
1. CPP 2	3	3
Total	108	80

Technical Review Form

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

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Propel Schools Foundation (U282M160028)

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: 35

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:

The applicant demonstrated its success in increasing student achievement by presenting student performance data on the state assessment for the past three years. In measuring the proficiency level of all students, the applicant, Propel Schools' students consistently outperformed their peers in the resident districts on Math and ELA (p.e23). The same trend applied to the performance of the African American and Economically Disadvantaged students (pp. e24-25). Though there was a performance decline observed in 2014-15, the applicant provided convincing explanations about the decline which was due to the change of the state standards and assessment affecting all student performance in the state (p. e25).

Weaknesses:

The response would be fully-developed if the applicant provided student academic growth data to further demonstrate its success in increasing student achievement. Without the growth data, it is debatable whether the students' above average performance is due to the efforts of Propel Schools. In addition, even though all students in Propel Schools outperformed their peers in the resident districts but consistently below the state average for the past three years on Math and ELA (p. e 31 & 33). In analyzing all students' performance on PSSA, student performance declined from 2013 to 2014. For example, in 2013, 74% of students proficient in math declined to 67% in 2014. The state changed the state standards and assessment in 2015, thus, the 2015 data were set aside during data analysis.

Reader's Score: 12

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

Sub Question

Strengths:

As data indicated, Propel's African American students consistently outperformed their peers on the state assessments of Math and ELA for the past three years (pp. e27-28). The same performance trend applied to the performance of economically disadvantaged students (pp. e28-29).

Weaknesses:

No data were presented to demonstrate the student academic growth. Without the student academic growth data, it is debatable whether the students' above average performance is due to the efforts of Propel Schools and whether the gaps are closed. In addition, based on Grades 3-8 student performance data on the state assessment for the past three years, the performance of African American students on Math and ELA fluctuates from 2012-2013 to 2013-2014 (Table 6, p.e28). The same trend applied to the economically disadvantaged students (Table 7, p. e28). No other subgroups performance data were presented. In order to demonstrate the achievement gaps are closed, the gaps must be presented that they exist. No comparison can be made when other subgroups data are absent.

Reader's Score: 10

3.

Strengths:

The applicant demonstrated its success in achieving the results by presenting student performance data on the state assessment for the past three years. In measuring the proficiency level of African American and Economically Disadvantaged students, the applicant, Propel Schools' students consistently outperformed their peers in the resident districts and the same groups of students in the state on Math and ELA (pp.e32-33). All student attendance rates for the past three years are included in the application (p. e 73). The student attrition rates, college attendance rate, college persistence rates for low-income students as well as African American students are provided (p. e73 & 75).

Weaknesses:

Though the student attrition rates, college attendance rate, college persistence rates for low-income students as well as African American students are provided (p. e73 & 75), no state data of the graduation, college attendance, and college persistence rates for low-income students were presented. Thus, no comparison can be made to determine whether the applicant has achieved the desired results in these categories.

Reader's Score: 13

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 provided a detailed description of educationally disadvantaged student population to be served in the proposed locations of schools to be expanded. To assist educationally disadvantaged students in meeting the standards, the applicant proposed six "Promising Principles", which are concrete to ensure the educational delivery (pp. e59-62). The applicant expressed its intention to work with current student and alumni in supporting them in college (p. e35).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address its approach to assist students with disabilities and ELLs in meeting the state standards.

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 presented the project timeline and person responsible for the two school expansions (pp. e39-40). Performance objectives are clearly defined which are measurable and attainable (p. e53). For example, in closing the achievement gap, on academic proficiency rates, "Proficiency rates (as measured on state testes) for students enrolling during the expansion will be within 5 percentage points for students enrolled prior to the expansion with three years of enrollment" (pp. e 52-53). The capacity and post expansion capacity of each campus were clearly presented (pp. e36-37). The project design with all key elements presented is sound and executable. The applicant is likely to achieve the results based on their past experience.

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: 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 (4 points).**

Strengths:

The project objectives, outcomes and progress measures are clearly defined to measure the progress (pp. e39-40 & e52-53). The Project Director will execute the expansion project at both schools and oversight by key management staff to ensure that all activities are in conformance with the project objectives, outcome measures and performance measures, budget and timelines (p.e38).

Weaknesses:

Though the responsible persons were specified for the expansions (p. e39), no responsible persons were identified in the management plan to monitor the progress measures towards its objectives. It is arguable whether the objectives can be achieved with the absence of such information.

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).**

Strengths:

The business plan including oversight Boards and Committee, central office and school level management structures are well developed and presented (pp. e54-58). The applicant clearly displays responsibilities of each office and deliverables to be developed. Such structure ensures the sustainability of the project operation (pp. e54-58). The applicant proposed sustainable financial plan so that the expanded schools will be self-sustained from recurring public resources (p. e64).

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 proposed a 5-year financial model based on its past experience in opening and operating charter schools as well as a detailed explanation of its governance and management structure. The board of directors and school council oversee the performance of charter schools managed by the central administrative office in the areas of financial, instructional, human resources, and other operational activities (pp. e54-58). The operating model is

Sub Question

strategically sound to maintain the sustainability of the project. Three letters of support were included in the application (pp. e119-121).

Weaknesses:

Though the applicant believes substantial partner support for operations has not been needed over the history, the criterion of evidence of broad support from stakeholders needs to be addressed to ensure the project's long-term success. No other evidence is presented to demonstrate a commitment of current and future partners in supporting the success of the project.

Reader's Score: 3

4.

Strengths:

No strengths noted.

Weaknesses:

Though the applicant does not anticipate that any of its schools will fail to attain improved student achievement, a plan with specific procedures and protocols should be in place. Such plan ensures the applicant to actively monitor the performance of its schools and being proactive to minimize the risks of operating underperforming schools.

Reader's Score: 0

5.

Strengths:

The resumes of the key leaders are evident in the application (pp. e106-118). Based on the resumes and CVs, the leaders have brought extensive expertise in the areas of finance, educational leadership, special education which are critical to the success of charter schools. In addition, the backgrounds and past experience of the team are likely to contribute to the success of managing the project.

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 has contracted the RAND Corporation to conduct an independent research. The evaluation plan is well developed including research questions, methodologies for data collection, research challenges and limitations (pp. e47-

52). The objective performance measures used in the evaluation plan are aligned with the intended outcomes (pp. e47-52). For example, one of the objective performance measures proposed for evaluation is "maintaining the pace of learning for continuing students and closing the achievement gap between new expansion students and continuing students" (p. e47) is well aligned with the intended outcomes of the project stated in the Abstract of this application that "closing the achievement gap between new students enrolled during expansion and continuing students" (p. e14).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses 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:

The priority was not addressed.

Weaknesses:

The priority was not addressed.

Reader's Score: 0

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 applicant submitted current student enrollment data to demonstrate the diverse student body the CMO serves and its approach of three systems to promote diversity (pp. e19-21). The rate of students with disability and ELLs the CMO serves is included in the application, which is comparable to the rate in schools in the surrounding area (p. e21).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/02/2016 12:22 PM