

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/11/2016 03:54 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Uncommon Schools, Inc. (U282M160015)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Eligible Applicant		
1. Quality of Applicant	50	49
Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students		
1. Disadvantaged Students	10	9
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	97
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	101

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Charter Management Organization - 1: 84.282M

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Uncommon Schools, Inc. (U282M160015)

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: 49

Sub Question

1.

Strengths:

Figure B2 on pages 33-35 clearly and extensively outlines strategies and efforts to ensure access for and an invitation to students with disabilities and ELLs. The applicant provides a wealth of data for the past 3 years with comparisons to the district, state and nation for all subgroups where available. They leave no doubt to the impact Uncommon has in successfully improving academic achievement among those they serve. They attain impressive results across all state exams, AP and SAT test (pages 26-27).

Weaknesses:

The application addresses why limited data is provided on certain subgroups (pages 23-24), the underlying causes of low enrollment and how they work to ensure equal opportunity for SPED and ELL students. However, as outlined in Appendix F, this really varies by state and by school.

Reader's Score: 19

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:

Uncommon is able to provide third party studies, which have evaluated and found these schools to be successful at closing the achievement gap. The quotes pulled from the 2013 CREDO study and included in Figure A.1 demonstrate the undeniable impact Uncommon has across all subgroups of interest. Furthermore recent data on

Sub Question

state exams in Appendix F shows how Uncommon schools consistently exceed state results, sometimes many times over.

Weaknesses:

None 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:

On metrics for attendance, retention, high school graduation, and college enrollment and persistence, Uncommon schools have produced consistently strong outcomes among students over the past three years as supported by significant data in Appendices F. 2,3,8-10. In many cases, especially college persistence, the results of Uncommon's disadvantages students exceed rates for white students and those in the top income quartile.

Weaknesses:

None 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 serves a student body comprised of disadvantaged students across their many campuses, that in most cases, is reflective of, if not more disadvantaged than the district and state, as evident in Figure B.1 and Appendix F.1. They have a clear understanding of and vision for the general locations of expansion and replication schools, which will serve the same populations they already support.

They highlight proven parts of their model on pages 37-38 (integrated and continuous use of data and instructional observation, and Summer Teaching Fellows) that have driven improvement while highlighting new innovations around centralized curriculum (pages 38-39).

Weaknesses:

However, no expansion schools were noted as having been identified by the applicant, despite the fact that these expansions would exist within and come from Uncommon's current portfolio of schools.

Reader's Score: 9

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 proposal presents a thoughtful and clearly articulated plan focused on three goals (pages 41-43) with growth strategically spread across cities based on what they can accommodate and what the landscape of each will allow.

Figure C.5 provides an impressive table of performance measure that will inform growth and progress on the project to both internal and external stakeholders. Given their previous CSP grants, this response includes obvious understanding by the applicant of the delineation of responsibilities around federal grant management and reporting.

Weaknesses:

None 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: 20

Sub Question

1.

Strengths:

Applicant presents a solid management plan with clear actions, responsibilities and timing that exemplifies the vast experience Uncommon has in opening and expanding new schools. Their expertise has been captured in useful documents and procedures on pages 49-50.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

None 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:

Uncommon has a set of established and experienced teams at the CMO who will be responsible for the major milestones of this project, namely around facilities, finance, administration, human resources, governance and academics (pages 51-54). The response describes high level leadership structures and oversight at the campus level. Further Uncommon has already made substantial progress on authorizer approvals for all 2016-2017 school openings.

Weaknesses:

None 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:

Uncommon exercises sound financial practice and maintains a clear audit of the past fiscal year (Appendix G.1). They have shared a solid multi-year financial projection that accounts for and plans expected growth as well as standard school-level budgets (appendix G.2).

The CMO has raised substantial philanthropy (\$40MM) over the past three years to support a variety of initiatives from local and national funders.

Weaknesses:

None 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 has not had to close a school to date (page 57) and relies on consistent data monitoring and, where necessary, remediation to avoid the escalation of any issue that could lead to a closure. Although they don't have a school closure plan of their own, Uncommon will follow the closure plans of the respective authorizer if the need should arise.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

None 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 organization has very experienced leadership with career progressions that, for many, started in the classroom. This likely provides great context for Uncommon's organizational direction. Their experience managing previous CSP grants will ensure smooth implementation of a new grant.

Weaknesses:

None 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 demonstrates an understating of evaluation requirements of CSP grants. They have a clear plan for a rigorous study, conducted by a credible firm, to identify impact and best practices among the CMO (pages 63-66). However this is not the same as the general tracking and reporting on project outcomes the grant will require. Yet Uncommon collects a wide variety of data (page 67) to track progress along many metrics and should have access to all results needed to evaluate their progress.

Weaknesses:

The organization has a clear understanding of and capability to evaluate progress on the project's goals independently of a Mathematica study. Although they do not detail this in their response, they have the ability to deliver as evident on page 48.

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:

CPP 1.b. Uncommon sets out a 3-pronged approach to serving families in communities in need of quality schools, which includes: bringing new schools to communities without a good local option; working with the district to identify and turnaround low performing schools; and sharing best practices with teachers in state-identified priority schools to strengthen instructional talent (page 19).

Weaknesses:

None notes

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:

Did not respond to this CPP.

Weaknesses:

Did not respond to this CPP.

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted

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Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/05/2016 11:47 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Uncommon Schools, Inc. (U282M160015)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Eligible Applicant		
1. Quality of Applicant	50	43
Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students		
1. Disadvantaged Students	10	7
Quality of the Project Design		
1. Project Design	10	8
Quality of the Management Plan & Personnel		
1. Management Plan/Personnel	20	15
Quality of Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	10	10
Sub Total	100	83
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Supporting High-Need Students		
1. CPP 1	5	0
Promoting Diversity		
1. CPP 2	3	0
Sub Total	8	0
Total	108	83

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Charter Management Organization - 1: 84.282M

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Uncommon Schools, Inc. (U282M160015)

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: 43

Sub Question

1.

Strengths:

Evidence is provided both in the narrative (p.26) and the appendices (p.147) that demonstrates the applicant's track record of consistently exceeding state averages in a range of metrics, including subject proficiency, AP and SAT participation and achievement, 4-year graduation rates, and college enrollment and completion rates.

Weaknesses:

A full breakdown of each metric by school, grade level, student subgroup, and year would help in determining if these averages are truly representative of the achievements of ALL students. Much of the applicant's response to Selection Criteria 2 addresses some of these concerns. The Applicant says that they enroll a lower percentage of students requiring special education or those designated as English Learners than their "district counterparts" or "local school districts" (p.23). Neighborhood demographics are given as the reason for this.

Reader's Score: 16

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 cites third-party research, including reports from Mathematica Policy Research and the Center for Research on Educational Outcomes (p.28), which provides compelling evidence that the Applicant's schools promote significantly greater student growth than schools serving comparable student populations. Moreover, this

Sub Question

accelerated student growth is seen in all student subgroups, suggesting the closing of achievement gaps over time between the schools' educationally disadvantaged students and those nationally (p.30).

Weaknesses:

However, the applicant does not address achievement gaps within their network of schools. For example, a small number of individual schools' see significant differences between the proficiency of African American and Latino students and the underperformance of students receiving special education. The applicant would benefit from including in its narrative an explanation of how it plans to ensure that these gaps are being addressed and how efforts will be made to avoid replicating them in its proposed schools.

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:

The applicant provides compelling evidence (p.30) that its students outperform state averages on state assessments, attendance, retention, graduation, and college enrollment and completion. For example, African American English proficiency rates are 24 and 15 percentage points above the New York state average; economically disadvantaged students in New Jersey exceeded Math proficiency rates by 61 percentage points in the 4th grade and 46 in the 8th.

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 clearly articulates the operational and instructional model to be implemented in order to assist disadvantaged students to meet or exceed state standards (pgs.33-40). The applicant provides a high level overview of the student demographic likely to be encountered in the locations in which it plans to open 13 new schools (p.33).

Weaknesses:

The Applicant does not provide any description of the communities and the unique situations and challenges that may be encountered opening new schools. In general, there is little attention paid to community differences beyond student demographics.

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 articulates three objectives (p.41) in pursuit of a single, overarching goal that are specific, measurable, and attainable, and clearly tied to the larger growth plan: 1) to open 13 new schools to provide 5,500 new seats; 2) to improve and scale outstanding academic performance; and 3) to evaluate the program and disseminate findings.

Weaknesses:

The applicant outlines an ambitious growth plan but does not define specific performance targets for Performance Measures 2 and 3 or Project Measures 2 and 3 (p.45).

Reader's Score: 8

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.

Strengths:

The Applicant provides a schedule of activities (p.49) that will be conducted annually in pursuit of its objectives. The proposed project tasks clearly articulate an understanding of some of the practical steps that are required to achieve the stated objectives.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

Though clearly very high level, there are some important omissions: timelines and schedules are not provided for securing facilities, community outreach and engagement activities, student recruitment, or meeting authorizer compliance milestones.

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:

In its business plan, the applicant lists the general responsibilities of teams overseeing facilities, budgeting, board governance, human capital, and central office supports (p.51). The applicant appears to have the infrastructure and resources to successfully execute the proposed growth plan.

Weaknesses:

However, the applicant does not address the required growth in central office personnel or organizational infrastructure to support such ambitious expansion. Nor does the business plan articulate the costs of expansion, the increased investment in infrastructure, or how those investments will be funded beyond the federal grant period.

Reader's Score: 2

- 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 an overview of a financial model designed to ensure financial sustainability after the initial start-up phase. Significant fundraising of \$40MM in private philanthropy in recent years (p.56) in addition to a portion of a \$39MM facilities loan pool speaks to the Applicants success at raising additional funds.

Weaknesses:

In the narrative, the applicant does not provide detailed numbers for "start-up costs" opposed to "operational costs". Replication school projections included in the appendices (p.160) show schools with an annual surplus after Year 1 without philanthropy, suggesting that federal funds aren't required to cover costs at the school level. Similarly, central office budgets (p.157) show a surplus without philanthropy. The Applicant says that they will receive part of a \$39MM facilities loan raised jointly with a number of local CMOs, but the revenue from this agreement is not included in the financial projections and raises further questions about the need for additional federal funding.

Reader's Score: 3

- 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 articulates a clear process, in partnership with the authorizer, to close underperforming schools (p. 57).

Sub Question

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's leadership team (p.58) possess significant experience of opening successful charter schools at the proposed pace. For example, the CEO has overseen the opening of 14 new schools and the CFO has direct experience of managing federal Charter School Program awards.

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 will partner with Mathematica Policy Research to conduct a rigorous and thoughtful project evaluation that will look at six clearly articulated Research Questions to gauge both the success of the Applicant's instructional model and the success of the proposed replication and expansion plan (p.63).

Weaknesses:

The Applicant doesn't explain how they, or Mathematica, will gain access to individual student data for control group comparison.

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:

It is unclear how opening new charter schools beside struggling district schools is conducted in partnership with the district or is actively designed to assist the district in implementing structural interventions at low-performing schools. It is similarly unclear if professional development partnerships are part of a formal district-led restructuring strategy of identified "priority" schools. Though past turnaround work is laudable, it does not appear that the takeover and turnaround of low-performing schools, as determined by SIG eligibility as part of an LEA's restructuring strategy, is part of the applicant's growth plan.

Though the applicant would have received a point for successfully meeting the requirements of Competitive Priority 1c, by applying for both Competitive Priority 1b and 1c, the applicant must be scored on the priority with the highest potential score (1b).

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:

Applicant did not address.

Weaknesses:

Applicant did not address.

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/05/2016 11:47 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/09/2016 03:59 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Uncommon Schools, Inc. (U282M160015)

Reader #3: *****

	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	8
Quality of the Management Plan & Personnel		
1. Management Plan/Personnel	20	16
Quality of Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	10	10
Sub Total	100	86
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	90

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Charter Management Organization - 1: 84.282M

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Uncommon Schools, Inc. (U282M160015)

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: 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:

Throughout the section beginning on page 22, the schools managed by the applicant have consistently demonstrated success in significantly increasing student achievement. They have done this across cities and regions, in turnaround scenarios, and across grade levels, and at scale. Evidence is strong that they will sustain high achievement levels in newly replicated and expanded schools in the regions they currently serve. The applicant presents data clearly and sufficiently in the narrative, and provides a useful and thorough analysis of outcomes.

Weaknesses:

The network has some variability in outcomes between schools. Some performance data for subgroups appears to be missing or incomplete, in particular for students with IEPs or students learning English.

Reader's Score: 18

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).

Sub Question

Strengths:

Subgroup performance of the applicant is strong across campuses and outperforms state averages, though the schools have higher concentrations of poverty than the state (p. 25, p. 150-153).

Weaknesses:

Some achievement gaps persist within schools managed by the network, and within the network across various subgroups. For example, the tables on pages 150-153 indicate gaps between all students in a given school (within the network) and students in that school receiving special education services or learning English. Gaps vary in size across the network, but they appear to exist to some degree in each school in the network.

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:

The applicant's outcomes compare favorably to state averages where the applicant serves students across virtually every indicator (22-30, 150-153). The applicant demonstrates a consistent record of strong performance against state comparisons.

Weaknesses:

None 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 describes strong results across subgroups, including students with disabilities and English language learners (29-30). The applicant provides some program description with regard to how it provides access to a free and

appropriate public education (FAPE). The applicant provides a high-level overview of student types and demographics likely to be encountered in expansion and replication regions and schools (32-34).

Weaknesses:

The applicant's plans for providing access to all students are included, but at a very general/high level (in terms of how all students will be provided a free and appropriate public education). More detail would be useful in evaluating the success and preparedness of the program to be replicated to all new students. The applicant also provides an insufficiently general description of the communities and types of students it will enroll; it does not provide information on the specific communities affected by this proposed program expansion and how those communities, in particular, might be unique or otherwise differ from those already served.

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:

Beginning on page 45, the applicant provides goals that are clear and measurable, and evidence (namely, prior performance) suggests they are attainable. The applicant demonstrates its board's support for expansion plans.

Weaknesses:

Like other areas of the proposal, this section remains general, and refers to the way that expansions typically occur within this school network. The description is only somewhat sufficient in providing specific goals and objectives that are specific to this particular expansion and replication plan.

Reader's Score: 8

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: 16

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 general plan and table that includes milestones and timelines (49).

Weaknesses:

The applicant's management plan is not specific to this particular program expansion. There are elements of a successful management plan that are missing or undeveloped, such as required approvals, community outreach, and facilities determinations, and insufficiently describes the management of these vital elements of the expansion plan.

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:

Beginning on page 51, the applicant provides a business plan that includes subcategories around facilities, financial management, central office and IT supports, academic achievement, governance, oversight and HR. The plan also describes which network personnel would typically manage startup and operational tasks.

Weaknesses:

The applicant's business plan is not specific to this particular program expansion. This section includes general details and brief job descriptions for Uncommon Schools' central office and network roles, rather than a clear business plan that supports this particular expansion.

Reader's Score: 2

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 letters of support from program partners and a broad base of stakeholders in the regions it intends to expand (96-106). A financial model is provided.

Weaknesses:

None identified.

Reader's Score: 4

Sub Question

- 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:

A plan for closure is provided that goes some way in providing detail and considering the needs of students and families should such an event occur (57).

Weaknesses:

None 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:

This organization is clearly adequately staffed to manage replication and expansion. The team has a high level of experience managing expansions such as the one proposed.

Weaknesses:

None 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:

An evaluation plan indicates a commitment from Mathematica Policy Research (107) and a resume of the particular researcher who will conduct the evaluation. The applicant has a track record of working with external evaluators (28), which is convincing evidence that it will be able to fulfill data and other requirements of external evaluators completing a rigorous evaluation of the program's performance under the grant.

Weaknesses:

None 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:

Beginning on page 113, in the appendices, the applicant includes letters of support from city and school district partners where the schools intend to expand and replicate. There is evidence that the applicant has significant prior experience partnering with districts in turnaround and improvement efforts, and dissemination of successful practices.

Weaknesses:

None 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:

None noted.

Weaknesses:

There is minimal to no evidence that the applicant intends to promote student diversity at the school level or create a school environment that is designed to avoid racial isolation. This applicant manages neighborhood schools that are largely minority/low income students.

The applicant freely admits that it does not currently enroll ELL or SPED students at rates equivalent to those of enrolling districts, though it is attempting to increase enrollment of these students and create a welcoming environment that supports these students as well.

Reader's Score: 0

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