

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 02/12/2020 04:41 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Achievement First Inc (S282M200021)

Reader #1: *****

| | Points Possible | Points Scored |
|---|-----------------|---------------|
| Questions | | |
| Selection Criteria | | |
| Quality of the Applicant and Adequacy Resources | | |
| 1. Applicant and Resources | 40 | 40 |
| Significance of Contribution in Assisting Students | | |
| 1. Disadvantaged Students | 20 | 15 |
| Quality of the Project Design and Evaluation Plan | | |
| 1. Project Design/Evaluation | 30 | 11 |
| Quality of Project Personnel and Management Plan | | |
| 1. Personnel/Management | 10 | 8 |
| Sub Total | 100 | 74 |
| | | |
| Priority Questions | | |
| Competitive Preference Priority | | |
| CPP 3: High School Students | | |
| 1. High School Students | 2 | 1 |
| CPP4: Serve Native American Students | | |
| 1. Native American Students | 4 | 0 |
| CPP5: Reopening Poor-Performing Schools | | |
| 1. Reopening Schools | 2 | 0 |
| Sub Total | 8 | 1 |
| | | |
| Total | 108 | 75 |

Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - FY20 CMO - 3: 84.282M

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Achievement First Inc (S282M200021)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Applicant and Adequacy Resources

1. 1. Quality of the Eligible Applicant and Adequacy of Resources

In determining the quality of the eligible applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 40

Sub

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

Strengths:

Achievement First has a comprehensive data set across three state data systems, which provides evidence of the network's outperforming comparisons to the local district and the state in virtually every category. The applicant has established Data Days, providing their staff with training and time to participate in data collection and analysis. (e36-37)

Eight replications with two high schools and four expansions with one high school designed to grow from one to thirty-seven overall and replication of one high school and two high-quality charter schools. (e39-47)

Achievement First presented evidence of their student outcomes including students are graduating college at five times the national rate (e33), college remediation is lower than 6% compared to the 63% national average, (e34) state assessment scores have grown in proficiency 28% in New York, 14% in, Rhode Island and 22% in Rhode Island in Connecticut (e36), attendance rates 96.5%. (e38)

The applicant presented achievement results per state that included comparison data to districts and the state. (e38-44) Achievement First also has interim assessments every six weeks to support instruction and state and national tests to compare achievement. Each state report highlighted significant outcomes, including Connecticut proficiency rates, outperformed the district by 32%, (e38) New York scores outperformed the state, and provided evidence of closing the achievement gap (e40). In Rhode Island, the Achievement First students outperformed the state (23%) and the district (41%). (e41)

A longitudinal analysis of academic growth in New York evidenced a 34% increase in proficiency in six years while Connecticut, based on its four years of data, has a 14% increase. (e42) The graduation rate was 93.5% across the network with English Language Learners (ELL) at 85.71% and students with disabilities 91.89%, which outperforms

Sub

the states of New York and Connecticut in each category. (e44-45)

Achievement First has a structured data analysis process supporting a deeper analysis. The use of specific examinations of identified subpopulation outcomes, such as the special education data evidencing positive growth in proficiency (e43) or a focused disaggregation of identified subgroups like the examination of achievement results with a focus on capstone grades, fourth and eighth are examples of the depth of data analysis. The Achievement First fourth grade proficiency was 67% compared to the district (27%) and state (49%). (e40)

Weaknesses:

No weakness found.

Reader's Score: 10

- 2. b. The extent to which one or more charter schools operated or managed by the applicant have closed; have had a charter revoked due to noncompliance with statutory or regulatory requirements; or have had their affiliation with the applicant revoked or terminated, including through voluntary disaffiliation.**

Strengths:

Achievement First provided a statement that it has not had any charters to close or have their charter revoked due to compliance issues with statutory or regulatory requirements. (e46)

Achievement First has been proactive with the development of a basic set of policies and procedures to address a school closure. (e47) For example, there is a defined three step process to be utilized if a school faces closure. (e45-47)

Weaknesses:

No weakness found.

Reader's Score: 10

- 3. c. The extent to which one or more charter schools operated or managed by the applicant have had any significant issues in the area of financial or operational management or student safety, or have otherwise experienced significant problems with statutory or regulatory compliance that could lead to revocation of the school's charter.**

Strengths:

Achievement First document the lack of fiscal, organizational management, or student safety that led to a closure of the revocation of a school's charter. (e47) Achievement First has experienced a merger of two middle schools based on fiscal restraints of the state's funding for charter education, which did not involve any compliance issues. (e46)

In Connecticut this is very important based on the per pupil funding rate for [REDACTED]

Weaknesses:

No weakness found.

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

4. d. **The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support.**

Strengths:

The grant funding supports start-up costs. The Achievement First financial sustainability plan is perpetuated on a fiscal model that requires public fund availability to assure that Achievement First charters are fully funded with state allocations by year three of implementation. (e48). For instance the Wexford Foundation has provided past funding and included a pledge for continuing support. (e48-49)

Achievement First has a strong history of philanthropic gifts and grant funds totaling over 80 million dollars to support other funding needs. (e49)

Weaknesses:

No weakness found.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Significance of Contribution in Assisting Students

1. 2. Significance of Contribution in Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students

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

Reader's Score: 15

Sub

1. **1. The extent to which charter schools currently operated or managed by the applicant serve educationally disadvantaged students, particularly students with disabilities and English learners, at rates comparable to surrounding public schools or, in the case of virtual charter schools, at rates comparable to public schools in the State.**

Strengths:

In terms of numbers, Achievement First serves a high percentage of educationally disadvantaged students evidenced by demographics data with 97.3% minority enrollment, 79.2% free/reduced, 11.8% special education, and 7.9% ELL. (e51)

The Academic First achievement results indicated the CMO outperformed all three state's performance in every academic achievement category for minority, low-income, ELL, and students with disabilities subgroups. (e50-51) The results were significantly higher, with each category percentage was over 25%. Results for low income outperformed their state comparison group by 26% in CT, 34% in NY, and 35% in RI. The same results are true, with double-digit positive data for minority students in each state. (e50).

Across subpopulations ELL students, Achievement First outperformed comparisons by 30% in CT and 50% in NY and by 27 points in RI. Students with disabilities also outperformed state averages by 25% NY, 6% CT, and by 12 points in RI. (e51)

Sub

Weaknesses:

When comparing students with disabilities and ELL enrollment rates as compared to the district and state, there were large variances. For example, students with disabilities enrollment of 9.3% compared to the state (15.4%) and the district (17.1%). There was no information provided addressing the differences or any strategies defined to address the discrepancies. The same pattern was found with ELL students with CMO rate of 8.8% enrolled compared to the state (7.6%), but host the district (17.8%), documenting a wide difference in services provided to ELL students. (e49-54)

Reader's Score: 9

2. 2. The quality of the plan to ensure that the charter schools the applicant proposes to replicate or expand will recruit, enroll, and effectively serve educationally disadvantaged students, particularly students with disabilities and English learners.

Strengths:

Achievement First has been systematic in the establishment of replication sites considering communities of high need and establishing a tiered approach to school growth. (e54-55) Each replication of Achievement First is based on their highly effective service delivery model and includes all programmatic interventions designed to meet the needs of their diverse and high-needs student subgroups.

Achievement First commits to enroll a higher percentage of educationally disadvantaged students, as evidenced by the establishment of preferences for low-income, ELL, and students with disabilities as allowed in NY using weighted applications. (e 55-57)

Achievement First utilizes a set of engagement strategies to establish relationships with new students and families based on establishing necessary support services and transition to school or leadership/volunteer positions such as the Achievement First Ambassadors. (e59) Surveys of parents provide validation of the effectiveness of these recruitment strategies and parental involvement strategies, with 86% of parents recommending the school to other parents. (e60)

The applicant provided a detailed description of special education services. (e51-53)

Weaknesses:

The recruitment plan was limited to traditional components of working with community partners, bilingual printed recruitment materials (only English and Spanish), presentations, and mailings. (e56) The recruitment plan provided few details on staff assignments and recruitment duties, a marketing plan versus marketing tools, or a timeline of recruitment events.

The recruitment plan did not include any specific strategies focusing on students with disabilities or ELL students.

While the applicant provides exceptional academic services providing a detailed descriptor of special education services, the applicant did not provide details regarding specific programmatic strategies that are utilized with ELL students to assure academic success but focused on compliance requirements. (e52-53) Another issue of service delivery was that the more intensive special education services, Empower, were not offered at the high school level, which is a significant issue. (e53)

Reader's Score: 6

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Evaluation Plan

1. 3. Quality of the Project Design and Evaluation Plan for the Proposed Project

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 following factors:

Reader's Score: 11

Sub

1. 1. The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework.

Strengths:

Achievement First has a well-developed logic model (e533), which provides details regarding the conceptual framework for the replication/expansion with a set of defined resources, inputs, outputs, and outcomes. The project design focuses on management structure and organizational strategies aligned with expansion and replication instead of conceptualization of the school design. (e60-71)

Achievement First provided a replication graph which provides a structure but staggered replication and expansion plan. (e61) The logic model has three major components - programming, talent, and funding. (e533)

Weaknesses:

The focus of the framework was the organizational and management structure, governance, and leadership that supports the replication or expansion sites. (e69)

The logic model component of programming was not included in the narrative and is not the focus of the project design.

Reader's Score: 3

2. 2. The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the proposed project, as described in the applicant's logic model, and that will produce quantitative and qualitative data by the end of the grant period.

Strengths:

Achievement First has developed and operationalized an internal evaluative tool Achievement First Report Card. (e72) It is designed to utilize their extensive data set with comparisons to local districts and the state and input from a broad set of stakeholders, including alumni, parents, students, and staff. (e73) Designed around six performance questions, which are two per input in the logic model of "Programming" - with two focus on student outcomes, "Talent" -two on relationships with parents and staff, and "Funding Sources"-two organizational on network support and financial sustainability.

The established set of indicators has multiple data sources that will produce qualitative and quantitative data during the grant timeline. Supported by the excellent data collection, analysis, and Team Systems approach currently in place, the data will be rich and informative. (e73)

Weaknesses:

The methods of evaluation were unclear. There were examples of quantitative data collection but there was not qualitative data collected.(e72-76)

While Achievement First Report Card was created as an internal CMO drive assessment intervention, it was not included in the evaluation plan. (e72-76) There were multiple references and no copy was provided.

Sub

Reader's Score: 3

3. 3. The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.

Strengths:

Each of the six project outcomes has a defined set of data outcomes that are measurable and comprehensive with multiple assessment targets. (e74-76) For instance, the logic model (533) had all the resources and outputs and outcomes and impacts included. (e533)

Weaknesses:

Achievement First provided a logic model (e533). There was no evidence of a comprehensive evaluation plan. The outcomes defined in the logic model (e533) do not include a definition of the types of evaluative results that will be produced. This is due to the fact that several were vaguely stated or adequately defined to allow a clear understanding of the content that will be included in the evaluation. (e72-75)

Reader's Score: 3

4. 4. The extent to which the design for implementing and evaluating the proposed project will result in information to guide possible replication of project activities or strategies, including information about the effectiveness of the approach or strategies employed by the project.

Strengths:

Based on the current operational structure of the Team Systems approach, all data will be collected, analyzed with effectiveness defined by staff members. (e73) The primary evaluation result will be qualitative data.

Weaknesses:

The evaluation plan does not have any outside evaluators involved, and all data is collected inhouse with interpretation completed by staff. (e73)

There is little quantitative data collected in the evaluative process. (e73)

There is a lack of a comprehensive evaluation plan that would allow for comparisons to other organizations or control groups. (e73)

There is no mechanism to establish and disseminate lessons learned systematically. (e73)

Reader's Score: 2

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel and Management Plan

1. 4. Quality of Project Personnel and Management Plan

The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project and the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability.

In addition, the Secretary considers:

Reader's Score: 8

Sub

1. 1. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.

Strengths:

Achievement First commits to be an organization with leadership reflective of the community they serve, so there is a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Achievement First has a strong leadership team defined who have experience with the management of the organization's 2015 CSP grant. The team will coordinate with the Expansion Committee. (e77-78)

The staff organizational charts, located in the appendix, with the resumes that document the training and experience of leadership personnel. (e89-104)

Weaknesses:

No weakness found.

Reader's Score: 5

2. 2. The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

Strengths:

Achievement First utilizes a data-driven process supported with an internal data warehouse. The staff are trained in data collection and analysis. Achievement First has created a rigorous tool, Achievement First Report Card which drives the innovation cycle of increasing improvement. (e82)

Weaknesses:

There were no procedures identified to establish and support ongoing feedback. There was not a focus on continuous improvement with scheduled weekly or monthly data analysis. (e82-83)

There is a lack of detail regarding collection of data, analysis, and subsequent sharing feedback with various stakeholders. (e82-83)

There was not a focus on sharing lessons learned with identified conferences at the local, regional, and national venues.

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - CPP 3: High School Students

1. Competitive Preference Priority 3: High School Students

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must propose to --

- a. Replicate or expand high-quality charter schools to serve high school students, including educationally disadvantaged students;**

b. Prepare students, including educationally disadvantaged students, in those schools for enrollment in postsecondary education institutions through activities such as, but not limited to, accelerated learning programs (including Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses and programs, dual or concurrent enrollment programs, and early college high schools), college counseling, career and technical education programs, career counseling, internships, work-based learning programs (such as apprenticeships), assisting students in the college admissions and financial aid application processes, and preparing students to take standardized college admissions tests;

c. Provide support for students, including educationally disadvantaged students, who graduate from those schools and enroll in postsecondary education institutions in persisting in, and attaining a degree or certificate from, such institutions, through activities such as, but not limited to, mentorships, ongoing assistance with the financial aid application process, and establishing or strengthening peer support systems for such students attending the same institution; and

d. Propose one or more project-specific performance measures, including aligned leading indicators or other interim milestones, that will provide valid and reliable information about the applicant's progress in preparing students, including educationally disadvantaged students, for enrollment in postsecondary education institutions and in supporting those students in persisting in and attaining a degree or certificate from such institutions. An applicant addressing this priority and receiving a CMO grant must provide data that are responsive to the measure(s), including performance targets, in its annual performance reports to the Department.

Note: For purposes of this priority, postsecondary education institutions include institutions of higher education, as defined in section 8101(29) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESEA), and one-year training programs that meet the requirements of section 101(b)(1) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA).

Strengths:

a) Achievement First plans to replicate eight schools and expand four schools, of which three are high schools. (e18) Their planned high school expansion would add 940 students to the Achievement First network (e25) with the opening of two new high schools in year two and one in year four. (e25)

b) Achievement First has, for the last ten years, a college acceptance rate for 100% for its graduating seniors. (e24-26) The enrollment rate in postsecondary educational institutions is 91%, with 80% attending four-year colleges. (e26) Achievement First has an impressive record of college admission, entry, and retention. Their college graduation rate is six times higher than their peers. (e18) Achievement First has developed a focused plan to institute rigor in daily lessons with a mandatory AP course requirement that every senior will have taken seven AP courses. (e26) This focus on rigor is also reflected in their partnership with Uncommon Schools to produce rigorous lesson resource buildouts for all coursework aligning it to AP rigor. (e27) Documenting progress based on the AP requirements, all students take the pre-SAT and SAT exams to monitor academic progress. (e27)

c) The establishment of learning opportunities in their pre-college initiative includes internships, scholar preparation programs, and other academic enrichment activities, which will provide an opportunity to engage with postsecondary skills supported by rigorous academic expectations. The support services are impressive and are available to current students and alumni. College Success program and counselors provide campus support via partnerships with the college staff and defined resources. (e31-32) Achievement First has identified best practice strategies and utilizes a rubric-based tool to assess student needs resulting in a personalized approach for each student, group or campus interventions, and aggregate analysis of student persistence. (e31) Achievement First has established a fund with KIPP and Uncommon Schools for student support that allows access to nominal fiscal resources to alumni. (e32)

d) The engagement of alumni is a priority, and their input is impacting the redesign of the school's educational programs, the emerging career and technical services, and the development of the Skills for Success curriculum. (e32-33)

Weaknesses:

- a) The network selected the schools that will be involved with the grant. (e24-26)
- b) No weaknesses found. (e25-29)
- c) No weaknesses found. (e29-32)
- d) No weaknesses found. (e32-35)

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority - CPP4: Serve Native American Students

1. Competitive Preference Priority 4: Opening a New Charter School or Replicating or Expanding a High-quality Charter School to Serve Native American Students

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must --

a. Propose to open a new charter school, or replicate or expand a high-quality charter school, that—

- 1. Utilizes targeted outreach and recruitment in order to serve a high proportion of Native American students, consistent with nondiscrimination requirements contained in the U.S. Constitution and Federal civil rights laws;
- 2. Has a mission and focus that will address the unique educational needs of Native American students, such as through the use of instructional programs and teaching methods that reflect and preserve Native American language, culture, and history; and
- 3. Has or will have a governing board with a substantial percentage of members who are members of Indian Tribes or Native American organizations located within the area to be served by the new, replicated, or expanded charter school;

b. Submit a letter of support from at least one Indian Tribe or Native American organization located within the area to be served by the new, replicated, or expanded charter school; and

c. Meaningfully collaborate with the Indian Tribe(s) or Native American organization(s) from which the applicant has received a letter of support in a timely, active, and ongoing manner with respect to the development and implementation of the educational program at the charter school.

Strengths:

The applicant did not address this CPP.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address this CPP.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - CPP5: Reopening Poor-Performing Schools

1. Competitive Preference Priority 5: Reopening Academically Poor-Performing Schools as Charter Schools.

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must --

a. Demonstrate past success working with one or more academically poor-performing public schools or schools that previously were designated as persistently lowest-achieving schools or priority schools under the former School Improvement Grant program or in States that exercised ESEA flexibility, respectively, under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001; and

b. Propose to use grant funds under this program to restart one or more academically poor-performing public schools as charter schools during the project period by—

1. Replicating one or more high-quality charter schools based on a successful charter school model for which the applicant has provided evidence of success; and

2. Targeting a demographically similar student population in the replicated charter schools as was served by the academically poor-performing public schools

Strengths:

The applicant did not address this CPP.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address this CPP.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 02/12/2020 04:41 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 02/12/2020 04:41 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Achievement First Inc (S282M200021)

Reader #2: *****

| | Points Possible | Points Scored |
|---|-----------------|---------------|
| Questions | | |
| Selection Criteria | | |
| Quality of the Applicant and Adequacy Resources | | |
| 1. Applicant and Resources | 40 | 40 |
| Significance of Contribution in Assisting Students | | |
| 1. Disadvantaged Students | 20 | 15 |
| Quality of the Project Design and Evaluation Plan | | |
| 1. Project Design/Evaluation | 30 | 11 |
| Quality of Project Personnel and Management Plan | | |
| 1. Personnel/Management | 10 | 8 |
| Sub Total | 100 | 74 |
| Priority Questions | | |
| Competitive Preference Priority | | |
| CPP 3: High School Students | | |
| 1. High School Students | 2 | 1 |
| CPP4: Serve Native American Students | | |
| 1. Native American Students | 4 | 0 |
| CPP5: Reopening Poor-Performing Schools | | |
| 1. Reopening Schools | 2 | 0 |
| Sub Total | 8 | 1 |
| Total | 108 | 75 |

Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - FY20 CMO - 3: 84.282M

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Achievement First Inc (S282M200021)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Applicant and Adequacy Resources

1. 1. Quality of the Eligible Applicant and Adequacy of Resources

In determining the quality of the eligible applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 40

Sub

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

Strengths:

The applicant provides sufficient evidence of academic achievement results in Connecticut (CT), New York (NY), and Rhode Island (RI). Growing from 1 school to 37 schools over 20 years, serving 14, 000 students across these three states. The applicant proposes to replicate eight schools, of which two are high schools and expand four schools, one of which is a high school. Student growth has been by 28% (NY), 14% (RI), and 22% (CT). As an example, across the three states, in 2019, ELA is at 59% while the state is at 56%, and the host districts at 29%. A frequent assessment cycle has realized this growth in academic outcomes. As well, attendance has either remained steady or improved slightly but is considered high, between 95.5% to 97%. Retention has steadily increased; in CT, it progressed from 90.8% to 92%; in NY from 89.8% to 90.2%, and in RI from 90.6% to 91.5%. among English Language Learners (ELA); retention across all three states was 95.3%. Graduation rates increased overall for all subgroups. (e35-45; Appendix I; e429-447)

Weaknesses:

No weakness found. (e35-45; Appendix I; e429-447)

Reader's Score: 10

2. b. The extent to which one or more charter schools operated or managed by the applicant have closed; have had a charter revoked due to noncompliance with statutory or regulatory requirements; or have had their affiliation with the applicant revoked or terminated, including through voluntary disaffiliation.

Sub

Strengths:

The applicant provides that no schools have experienced either a revocation or noncompliance issue. No issues of failure to adhere to regulations is reported by the applicant. A three-step process is in place to ensure smooth transition should schools close or be merged. The applicant provides that the CMO has merged two middle schools in CT due to financial reasons – lack of funding. This was attributed to low per pupil finding by the state of CT. (e18; e45-47)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found. (e18; e45-47)

Reader's Score: 10

- 3. c. The extent to which one or more charter schools operated or managed by the applicant have had any significant issues in the area of financial or operational management or student safety, or have otherwise experienced significant problems with statutory or regulatory compliance that could lead to revocation of the school's charter.**

Strengths:

The applicant aptly provides that the CMO has never experienced any closures due to operational and/or financial reasons, nor have they been cited or subjected to any revocation or noncompliance issues. (e27-28) This is of import and in Connecticut, the per pupil spending for charter student is [REDACTED] less than district allocations. (e46-48; Appendix F; e450-485)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted. (e46-48; Appendix F; e450-485)

Reader's Score: 10

- 4. d. The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support.**

Strengths:

The applicant adequately provides a history of successful leveraging of resources and an adequate plan for continued support of the project after federal funding ends through an economies of scale model. The applicant's proposed plan includes a history of philanthropic bridging given the discrepancy in funding. Several Foundation gifts are listed as evidence of ability to both bridge gaps in funding and leverage additional assets. For instance, the Robin Hood Foundation has pledged [REDACTED] over 16 years. It is likely this will continue. (e48-49; Appendix C; e136-143)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found. (e48-49; Appendix C; e136-143)

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Significance of Contribution in Assisting Students

1. 2. Significance of Contribution in Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students

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

academic standards, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 15

Sub

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

Strengths:

The applicant provided partial evidence of serving educationally disadvantaged students. Data from 2017-2018 was provided as this evidence. In this academic year, 71.2% of CMO students were eligible for free and/or reduced lunches compared to the state at 42.1% and host district at 73.9%, which is comparable. Students of Color (identified as Black and Hispanic) out performed state averages. A nest program for elementary and middle school students shows promise as it as a school-within-a-school or small school model providing intensive assistance; it is likely these students who receive intensive supports will matriculate in a more academically sound manner. (e49-54; Appendix G; Appendix I)

Weaknesses:

Students with special needs were enrolled in the CMO schools at a rate of 9.3% which is lower than the state at 15.4% and host at 17.1%. Enrollment of students identified as English Language Learners (ELL) was mixed; the CMO enrolled at a rate of 8.8%, the state at 7.6% but host district enrolled at higher rate, 17.8%, which is not comparable. In the aforementioned examples, the applicant serves identified students at a rate below host districts and the state. Among the states, there were variances. (e49-54; Appendix G; Appendix I)

Reader's Score: 9

- 2. The quality of the plan to ensure that the charter schools the applicant proposes to replicate or expand will recruit, enroll, and effectively serve educationally disadvantaged students, particularly students with disabilities and English learners.**

Strengths:

Projected enrollment increases are clearly specified in the applicant's plan to replicate and/or expand through recruitment, enrollment, and by effectively serve educationally disadvantaged students, in particular students with disabilities. The proposed plan includes targeted assistance for students with special needs, in keeping with the CMO's mission to serve. Communication between hosts and the CMO schools is fostered and addresses transference of services through IEP sharing. A partial marketing plan to recruit includes working with community partners to identify students and heavy familial involvement; word of mouth is the primary recruitment strategy. Face-to-face recruitment will be held at school fairs, day care centers, YMCA, and libraries. An at-risk preference exists for enrollment, then a blind lottery system is used for enrollment. (e54-60; Appendix I)

Weaknesses:

No specific recruitment plan is provided. For example, beyond recommendations and parental promotions, the proposed plan does not include broadcast/radio media or electronic media. No timeline of recruitment strategies is included in the proposed plan. Responsibility for recruitment is not addressed sufficiently. There are no specific strategies to recruit students identified as English Language Learners or students with disabilities. (e54-60; Appendix I)

Reader's Score: 6

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Evaluation Plan

1. 3. Quality of the Project Design and Evaluation Plan for the Proposed Project

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 following factors:

Reader's Score: 11

Sub

1. 1. The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework.

Strengths:

An appropriate framework of resources, inputs, outputs, and outcomes is presented which merges with the CMO developmental plan. A blended budget plan of braiding funding stream is part of the proposed plan. A centralized office provides both oversight, resources, and other supports. This includes a team structure. As an example, there is a network support development team that supports growth and expansion through accessing private revenue sources. School structures are also in place as well as well-codified timelines and milestones for expansion. (e60-72)

Weaknesses:

Research was not provided to support the developmental or expansion plan. While the plan to expand is well-documented within the CMO, there is no supporting research undergirding the applicant's proposed plan. (e60-72)

Reader's Score: 3

2. 2. The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the proposed project, as described in the applicant's logic model, and that will produce quantitative and qualitative data by the end of the grant period.

Strengths:

A total of six performance questions are aligned to the proposed logic model (e533). Two questions address talent; two questions address outcomes, and two questions address budget. The applicant clearly describes data collection processes. (e72-76; e533)

Weaknesses:

While specific questions are listed in the proposed plan, there is no match between data sources used to answer questions. There is insufficient information provided regarding methods of evaluation. While some quantitative data may be produced and is indicated, no mention of qualitative data exists. The Achievement First Report Card is referenced and partially described; however, no card is actually provided as part of the applicant's proposed plan. (e72-76; e533)

Reader's Score: 3

3. 3. The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.

Sub

Strengths:

Performance measures are clearly articulated as: increase student enrollment by 3,375 students and serve 17,370 students in 45 schools by 2024-25. The applicant clearly states intention to replicate their CMO model to two new high schools in Brooklyn, NY and a replication high school in Providence, RI. Some of these objectives are measurable. A logic model (e533) included resources/outputs as well as outcomes/impact in both short-term and long-term outcomes. An example of a measurable outcome objective is projecting that 100% of CMO high school graduates will earn college acceptance. (e72-75; Appendix I)

Weaknesses:

While a logic model was included, (e533) there was no information presented about actual evaluation included in the model. Outcomes presented were not uniformly measurable. As an example, objective 2, outcomes 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 do not include measurable outcomes; several are vaguely stated and not quantified such as student test scores meet or exceed state average. (e72-75; Appendix I, e533)

Reader's Score: 3

- 4. 4. The extent to which the design for implementing and evaluating the proposed project will result in information to guide possible replication of project activities or strategies, including information about the effectiveness of the approach or strategies employed by the project.**

Strengths:

The applicant presents a partial plan that will provide for achieving diverse teacher applicants. Information was presented that attested to the need for diversity, especially as role models for children. Curriculum is available on the CMO website, which could possibly guide replication. The applicant intends to partner with other reform organizations which may also provide opportunities to guide replication. (e76-77)

Weaknesses:

While replication was specifically addressed throughout the application, it is unclear how this approach to diversity will guide replication. Implementation and evaluation were not discussed in sufficient detail. The proposed plan lacks mechanisms to document practices for sharing. No systematic plan to share lessons learned was presented either within or outside the CMO network. (e76-77)

Reader's Score: 2

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel and Management Plan

1. 4. Quality of Project Personnel and Management Plan

The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project and the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability.

In addition, the Secretary considers:

Reader's Score: 8

Sub

1. 1. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.

Strengths:

A history of the applicant using data was clearly presented. This is evidenced by reference to a data warehouse. Key project personnel possess sufficient experience and expertise, both relevant to the success of the applicant's proposed plan. For example, the development associate has experience with managing large grants. Other key project personnel are described according to the expertise they bring to the project. For instance, one Co-Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has experience with student achievement and coaching of principals. A staff organization chart was included. A team approach utilizing various team and committee structures is proposed that speaks additional oversight and supervision of the proposed plan. An example of such a committee is the expansion committee. (e77-81; Appendix B; e89-104)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found. (e77-81; Appendix B; e89-104)

Reader's Score: 5

2. 2. The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

Strengths:

The Achievement First Report Card was presented as an internal method of school comparison. The proposed plan suggested that elements such as achievement, parental satisfaction, attrition, attendance and staff satisfaction were components included in the report card, which appeared to be summative in nature. (e82-83)

Weaknesses:

There was a paucity of information provided regarding ongoing feedback, continuous improvement, and overall effectiveness of the plan. For example, no mention was made of any interval feedback loops such as weekly or monthly communication or perhaps, how bi-annual reports could achieve feedback. Faculty evaluation was not discussed in sufficient detail. Plans to share results were not included as part of the applicant's proposed plan such as at local conferences, charter conferences, and national conferences. There is a lack of detail regarding collection of data, analysis, and subsequent sharing feedback with various stakeholders. (e82-83)

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - CPP 3: High School Students

1. Competitive Preference Priority 3: High School Students

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must propose to --

a. Replicate or expand high-quality charter schools to serve high school students, including educationally disadvantaged students;

b. Prepare students, including educationally disadvantaged students, in those schools for enrollment in postsecondary education institutions through activities such as, but not limited to, accelerated learning programs (including Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses and programs, dual or concurrent enrollment programs, and early college high schools), college counseling, career and technical education programs, career counseling, internships, work-based learning programs (such as apprenticeships), assisting

students in the college admissions and financial aid application processes, and preparing students to take standardized college admissions tests;

c. Provide support for students, including educationally disadvantaged students, who graduate from those schools and enroll in postsecondary education institutions in persisting in, and attaining a degree or certificate from, such institutions, through activities such as, but not limited to, mentorships, ongoing assistance with the financial aid application process, and establishing or strengthening peer support systems for such students attending the same institution; and

d. Propose one or more project-specific performance measures, including aligned leading indicators or other interim milestones, that will provide valid and reliable information about the applicant's progress in preparing students, including educationally disadvantaged students, for enrollment in postsecondary education institutions and in supporting those students in persisting in and attaining a degree or certificate from such institutions. An applicant addressing this priority and receiving a CMO grant must provide data that are responsive to the measure(s), including performance targets, in its annual performance reports to the Department.

Note: For purposes of this priority, postsecondary education institutions include institutions of higher education, as defined in section 8101(29) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESEA), and one-year training programs that meet the requirements of section 101(b)(1) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA).

Strengths:

a) No strength found. (e24-26)

b) The applicant proposes to provide sufficient postsecondary access. Of their first graduating class, 91% matriculated to post secondary institutions. Mechanisms for achieving access and success include an Advanced Placement (AP) for ALL approach, intellectual preparation, rehearsing strategies, providing detailed feedback, and Foundations of Leadership. Internships and an integrated college access approach are also utilized as part of the plan. Teachers receive professional development on these approaches. (e25-29)

c) The applicant provides for an adequate plan to address support for enrollment in postsecondary pathways and to address attainment of postsecondary education through integrate college access. The two key initiatives, AP for ALL approach and Foundations of Leadership provide skills but also, college-matching and family engagement are proposed. Academic and financial advising is proposed as well. (e29-32)

d) A quantifiable performance measure is included as a part of the applicant's plan for replication/expansion. This is a 2019 graduation rate of five times the national average. Persistence has increased. (e32-35)

Weaknesses:

a) Only 25%, not 50% of schools will be expansion or replication schools. (e24-26)

b) No weaknesses found. (e25-29)

c) No weaknesses found. (e29-32)

d) No weaknesses found. (e32-35)

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority - CPP4: Serve Native American Students

1. Competitive Preference Priority 4: Opening a New Charter School or Replicating or Expanding a High-quality Charter School to Serve Native American Students

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must --

a. Propose to open a new charter school, or replicate or expand a high-quality charter school, that—

1. Utilizes targeted outreach and recruitment in order to serve a high proportion of Native American students, consistent with nondiscrimination requirements contained in the U.S. Constitution and Federal civil rights laws;

2. Has a mission and focus that will address the unique educational needs of Native American students, such as through the use of instructional programs and teaching methods that reflect and preserve Native American language, culture, and history; and

3. Has or will have a governing board with a substantial percentage of members who are members of Indian Tribes or Native American organizations located within the area to be served by the new, replicated, or expanded charter school;

b. Submit a letter of support from at least one Indian Tribe or Native American organization located within the area to be served by the new, replicated, or expanded charter school; and

c. Meaningfully collaborate with the Indian Tribe(s) or Native American organization(s) from which the applicant has received a letter of support in a timely, active, and ongoing manner with respect to the development and implementation of the educational program at the charter school.

Strengths:

a) Not addressed by applicant.

b) Not addressed by applicant.

c) Not addressed by applicant.

Weaknesses:

a) Not addressed by applicant.

b) Not addressed by applicant.

c) Not addressed by applicant.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - CPP5: Reopening Poor-Performing Schools

1. Competitive Preference Priority 5: Reopening Academically Poor-Performing Schools as Charter Schools.

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must --

a. Demonstrate past success working with one or more academically poor-performing public schools or schools that previously were designated as persistently lowest-achieving schools or priority schools under the former School Improvement Grant program or in States that exercised ESEA flexibility, respectively, under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001; and

b. Propose to use grant funds under this program to restart one or more academically poor-performing public schools as charter schools during the project period by—

1. Replicating one or more high-quality charter schools based on a successful charter school model for which the applicant has provided evidence of success; and

2. Targeting a demographically similar student population in the replicated charter schools as was served by the academically poor-performing public schools

Strengths:

a) Not addressed by applicant.

b) Not addressed by applicant.

Weaknesses:

a) Not addressed by applicant.

b) Not addressed by applicant.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 02/12/2020 04:41 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 02/12/2020 04:41 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Achievement First Inc (S282M200021)

Reader #3: *****

| | Points Possible | Points Scored |
|---|-----------------|---------------|
| Questions | | |
| Selection Criteria | | |
| Quality of the Applicant and Adequacy Resources | | |
| 1. Applicant and Resources | 40 | 40 |
| Significance of Contribution in Assisting Students | | |
| 1. Disadvantaged Students | 20 | 15 |
| Quality of the Project Design and Evaluation Plan | | |
| 1. Project Design/Evaluation | 30 | 11 |
| Quality of Project Personnel and Management Plan | | |
| 1. Personnel/Management | 10 | 8 |
| Sub Total | 100 | 74 |
| Priority Questions | | |
| Competitive Preference Priority | | |
| CPP 3: High School Students | | |
| 1. High School Students | 2 | 1 |
| CPP4: Serve Native American Students | | |
| 1. Native American Students | 4 | 0 |
| CPP5: Reopening Poor-Performing Schools | | |
| 1. Reopening Schools | 2 | 0 |
| Sub Total | 8 | 1 |
| Total | 108 | 75 |

Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - FY20 CMO - 3: 84.282M

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Achievement First Inc (S282M200021)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Applicant and Adequacy Resources

1. 1. Quality of the Eligible Applicant and Adequacy of Resources

In determining the quality of the eligible applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 40

Sub

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

Strengths:

Achievement First Achievement First provides summary information in the narrative and detailed academic achievement results in Connecticut (CT), New York (NY), and Rhode Island (RI) for all students and for subgroups in supplementary attachments (pages e429 – e447). Tables are very clear. Student test scores exceed district and state proficiency levels. For example, in 2019 student achievement in ELA was 59% while the state was reported at 56% and the district was reported at 29%. Data provided for multiple years to show growth. Also provides data on attendance rates between SY2016-17 and SY2018-19 and retention rates between SY2016-17 and SY2019-20. Retention rates, for example, have increased over time. In CT retention increased from 90.8 to 92.0%, in RI from 90.6% to 91.5% and in NY from 89.8% to 90.2%. Retention rates for English Language Learners (ELL) students was 95.3% across Achievement First schools. Attendance rates are high and have remained high or shown small increases. High school graduation rates have increased overall and for subgroups. Compared to states where schools reside, graduation rates for Achievement First students are higher. Achievement First has grown from one school to 37 schools over 20 years and serving 14,000 students (pages e35-e45, e429-447).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

2. b. The extent to which one or more charter schools operated or managed by the applicant have closed; have had a charter revoked due to noncompliance with statutory or regulatory requirements; or have had their affiliation with the applicant revoked or terminated, including through voluntary disaffiliation.

Sub

Strengths:

Achievement First has not had a charter school closed or charter revoked. They merged two middle schools to reduce costs associated with maintained two separate campuses. They are being thoughtful about how to move forward and are moving more slowly with opening new schools. The applicant has proactive policies and procedures. A three-step process is followed to ensure a smooth transition occurs (e18, e45-e47).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

- 3. c. The extent to which one or more charter schools operated or managed by the applicant have had any significant issues in the area of financial or operational management or student safety, or have otherwise experienced significant problems with statutory or regulatory compliance that could lead to revocation of the school's charter.**

Strengths:

Achievement First clearly states they have had no significant financial or operational issues. They have not been cited or subjected to any revocation or noncompliance issues (page e27-e28). Achievement First provided their 990 and independent audit. The audit found no deficiencies or material weaknesses. Sound financial and operational procedures are used (pages e46-e48, e450-485).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

- 4. d. The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support.**

Strengths:

Achievement First provides very detailed budget information overall and broken down for each proposed replication and expansion school (pages e48-e49, e136-e143). They state that grant funds will cover the startup costs and per pupil funding sustains the schools generally in year 3. When additional funding is needed they have established relationships with a network of donors. Letters of support are provided including pledge from Robin Hood Foundation for nearly [REDACTED]

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Significance of Contribution in Assisting Students

- 1. 2. Significance of Contribution in Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students**

The Secretary considers the significance of contribution in assisting educationally

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

Reader's Score: 15

Sub

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

Strengths:

Achievement First provides detailed data on the percentage of students in their current schools who are minority, economically disadvantaged, educationally disadvantaged, and ELL (pages e49-e50, e429-e447, e518-e528). Achievement First provides narrative along with the tables with comparative data. For example, in 2017-18 71.2% of their students were eligible for free or reduced price lunch compared to the district at 73.9% economically disadvantaged and state at 42.1%. Minority students (Black and Hispanic) served by Achievement First outperformed students across the state. Achievement First describes how they serve educationally disadvantaged students through inclusive environment, utilization of co-teaching, smaller class sizes, intensive reading. The applicant also provides information about Achievement First Bushwick Empower, which is a special needs school with more intensive special education programming that is available to students in NY. The Nest program provides intensive support to students.

Weaknesses:

Even though this grant is not being used in CT it is important to note that enrollment of educationally disadvantaged students in CT was 9.3% which is lower than the 15.4% for the state and 17.1% for the district (pages e49-e54, e429-e447, e518-e528). The applicant enrolls a smaller proportion of ELL students compared to the district and state (applicant: 8.8%, district: 17.8%, state: 7.6%) raising concerns about comparability.

Reader's Score: 9

- 2. The quality of the plan to ensure that the charter schools the applicant proposes to replicate or expand will recruit, enroll, and effectively serve educationally disadvantaged students, particularly students with disabilities and English learners.**

Strengths:

Achievement First provides a clear projected enrollment plan for recruiting educationally disadvantaged students including the strategic location of their schools. They use a blind lottery system. Their enrollment plan (page 38 e58) discusses identification of student's educational needs. The applicant's plan provides for targeted assistance for students with special needs and communication with the district regarding Individual Education Plans (IEPs). The primary recruitment method is word of mouth through events held at school fairs, day care centers, community centers, and libraries (pages e54-e60, e523-e542).

Weaknesses:

A clear specific plan is not provided (pages e54-e60, e534-e542). The applicant discusses a traditional approach to recruitment with limited activities such as recommendations and parental promotions. It is unclear what steps will be taken to recruit students with disabilities or ELLs. There is no discussion of other outreach methods such as electronic materials, radio, or social media. A timeline for recruiting students is not included. Individuals responsible for recruitment is insufficiently addressed.

Sub

Reader's Score: 6

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Evaluation Plan

1. 3. Quality of the Project Design and Evaluation Plan for the Proposed Project

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 following factors:

Reader's Score: 11

Sub

1. 1. The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework.

Strengths:

Achievement First provides a detailed conceptual framework that outlines the plans for implementing their project (pages e60-e72). They discuss their budget and internal processes. There is a network and school team structures and the central office provides oversight, resources, and other supports. For example, the network support development team supports the growth and expansion by accessing the necessary private revenue. Timelines and milestones for expansion are included.

Weaknesses:

Achievement First does not provide documentation of the evidence used to develop this framework beyond their experience operating charter schools over the past 20 years. Supporting research is not included in the application (pages e60-e72).

Reader's Score: 3

2. 2. The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the proposed project, as described in the applicant's logic model, and that will produce quantitative and qualitative data by the end of the grant period.

Strengths:

The logic model in the supplementary materials is comprehensive with activities and outcomes clearly identified (page e533). The model includes 6 questions: two questions focused on talent, two questions focused on outcomes, and two questions that address the budget. The data collection process is clear (pages e72-e76, e533).

Weaknesses:

Achievement First provides limited information about their evaluation methods. They provide 6 research questions they aim to answer and list the data elements they track that are designed to help answer those questions. It is unclear which data items will be used to answer which questions. For example, to answer the question "Are our students performing at a college-ready level?" it is possible they are using one or all of these data elements: State tests, Advanced Placement courses, SAT and college acceptance. However, for the question "Are we effectively serving the communities and families who need strong educational operations?" It is not clear how they are getting the information to answer this question or the question "Are we providing world class network support to our schools?" It would be helpful to see a copy of the Achievement First Report Card. No qualitative data is included (pages e72-e73, e533).

Sub

Reader's Score: 3

3. 3. The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.

Strengths:

Achievement First identifies 2 goals. Goal 1: Provide an additional 3,375 students with access to high-quality educational opportunities that will assist them in realizing their academic potential and developing the skills needed to achieve their postsecondary goals, including entering and graduating from top colleges and obtaining successful careers. Goal 2: Demonstrate that educational achievement gaps that fall along racial, socioeconomic lines can be closed at district scale by serving over 17,370 students in 45 schools by the 2024-25 school year. They identify 5 objectives and the related outcomes related to each objective. The objectives are clear and measurable (pages e72-e75, e519-e528).

Weaknesses:

It is unclear how Objectives 4 and 5 relate to the stated goals. For objective 4 it's not clear how student attendance, student retention, teacher retention, and enrollment waitlist demonstrate school quality. It is also not clear how fiscal responsibility meets their goals. Objective 2 only talks about grades 4 and 8. Achievement First stated they have data on Advanced Placement courses and SAT scores. An objective and outcomes related to these high school measures of performance are not included. Objective 3.1 that 100% of high school graduates will earn college acceptance is not realistic (pages e72-e75, e518-e528).

Reader's Score: 3

4. 4. The extent to which the design for implementing and evaluating the proposed project will result in information to guide possible replication of project activities or strategies, including information about the effectiveness of the approach or strategies employed by the project.

Strengths:

Achievement First provides an incomplete plan for attracting diverse teacher applicants (pages e76-e77). The application clearly makes the case for the need for diversity to serve as role models for students. The applicant makes curricula and operational resources available on their website. The applicant mentions in their abstract that they "partner with reform-oriented organizations to inform district- and state-wide education reform efforts."

Weaknesses:

Information about disseminating results and lessons learned is not discussed (pages e76-e77). Achievement First mentions in their abstract that they "partner with reform-oriented organizations to inform district- and state-wide education reform efforts" but the plan describing what this entails is unclear. There is a lack of detail regarding the sharing of lessons learned among stakeholders and the outside community.

Reader's Score: 2

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel and Management Plan

1. 4. Quality of Project Personnel and Management Plan

The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project and the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability.

In addition, the Secretary considers:

Reader's Score: 8

Sub

1. 1. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.

Strengths:

Key staff are qualified and resumes are provided (pages e77-e81, e89-e104). An organizational chart is included in the application. There is a strong team approach that uses a team and committee structure. This allows for additional oversight and multiple levels to ensure implementation of the plan. Key project staff possess expertise related to their positions. For example, the superintendent has considerable experience with student achievement. He also has experience coaching principals, the development and implementation of principal best practices as well as evaluating principals and schools.

Weaknesses:

No weakness found.

Reader's Score: 5

2. 2. The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

Strengths:

Achievement First provides examples of how they have used data in the past to address issues and make improvements and course corrections. Achievement First Report Card is used as an internal mechanism for comparing schools. Components included in the report card include: achievement, parental satisfaction, attrition, attendance and staff satisfaction (pages e72-83).

Weaknesses:

The plan lacks details on the steps for collecting data feedback, the types of data and feedback collected, and how it will be analyzed and sharing with stakeholders (pages e82-e83). There is no mention of internal processes for sharing feedback through weekly, monthly, or periodic meetings or annual or bi-annual reports. There are no plans specified for sharing results with stakeholders or the education community through conferences (local, regional, or national). There is a local of detail regarding data collection, analysis or reporting.

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - CPP 3: High School Students

1. Competitive Preference Priority 3: High School Students

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must propose to --

- a. Replicate or expand high-quality charter schools to serve high school students, including educationally disadvantaged students;
- b. Prepare students, including educationally disadvantaged students, in those schools for enrollment in postsecondary education institutions through activities such as, but not limited to, accelerated learning programs (including Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses and programs, dual or concurrent enrollment programs, and early

college high schools), college counseling, career and technical education programs, career counseling, internships, work-based learning programs (such as apprenticeships), assisting students in the college admissions and financial aid application processes, and preparing students to take standardized college admissions tests;

c. Provide support for students, including educationally disadvantaged students, who graduate from those schools and enroll in postsecondary education institutions in persisting in, and attaining a degree or certificate from, such institutions, through activities such as, but not limited to, mentorships, ongoing assistance with the financial aid application process, and establishing or strengthening peer support systems for such students attending the same institution; and

d. Propose one or more project-specific performance measures, including aligned leading indicators or other interim milestones, that will provide valid and reliable information about the applicant's progress in preparing students, including educationally disadvantaged students, for enrollment in postsecondary education institutions and in supporting those students in persisting in and attaining a degree or certificate from such institutions. An applicant addressing this priority and receiving a CMO grant must provide data that are responsive to the measure(s), including performance targets, in its annual performance reports to the Department.

Note: For purposes of this priority, postsecondary education institutions include institutions of higher education, as defined in section 8101(29) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESEA), and one-year training programs that meet the requirements of section 101(b)(1) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA).

Strengths:

(a) No strengths found.

(b) Sufficient detail is provided regarding post-secondary access. For example, the applicant reports that 91% of their first graduating class matriculate to post-secondary institutions. Approaches to improve access and success include having all seniors take 7 Advanced Placement (AP) courses, rehearsing strategies, providing feedback, and Foundation of Leadership. In addition, the applicant also utilize internships and integrated college access approach. Teachers are provided professional development on all of these approaches (e25-e29).

(c) The applicant includes a sufficient plan to address support for student enrollment in post-secondary education through integrated college access (e29-e32). There are two key elements to their program: Advanced Placement for ALL and Foundations of Leadership. They also include family engagement and college matching. Financial advising in addition to academic advising is included in the plan (page e29-e32).

(d) The plan for replication/expansion includes performance measures that provide quantitative information (page e32-e35). The graduation rate reported for 2019 is five times the national average and persistence has increased. There is partnership with other supporting entities and defined resources.

Weaknesses:

(a) Two of the 8 proposed (25%) schools will be high schools and one of the 4 expansion (25%) schools will be high schools.

(b) No weaknesses found.

(c) No weaknesses found.

(d) No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority - CPP4: Serve Native American Students

1. Competitive Preference Priority 4: Opening a New Charter School or Replicating or Expanding a High-quality Charter School to Serve Native American Students

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must --

a. Propose to open a new charter school, or replicate or expand a high-quality charter school, that—

1. Utilizes targeted outreach and recruitment in order to serve a high proportion of Native American students, consistent with nondiscrimination requirements contained in the U.S. Constitution and Federal civil rights laws;

2. Has a mission and focus that will address the unique educational needs of Native American students, such as through the use of instructional programs and teaching methods that reflect and preserve Native American language, culture, and history; and

3. Has or will have a governing board with a substantial percentage of members who are members of Indian Tribes or Native American organizations located within the area to be served by the new, replicated, or expanded charter school;

b. Submit a letter of support from at least one Indian Tribe or Native American organization located within the area to be served by the new, replicated, or expanded charter school; and

c. Meaningfully collaborate with the Indian Tribe(s) or Native American organization(s) from which the applicant has received a letter of support in a timely, active, and ongoing manner with respect to the development and implementation of the educational program at the charter school.

Strengths:

Applicant does not address this CPP.

Weaknesses:

Applicant does not address this CPP.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - CPP5: Reopening Poor-Performing Schools

1. Competitive Preference Priority 5: Reopening Academically Poor-Performing Schools as Charter Schools.

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must --

a. Demonstrate past success working with one or more academically poor-performing public schools or schools that previously were designated as persistently lowest-achieving schools or priority schools under the former School Improvement Grant program or in States that exercised ESEA flexibility, respectively, under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001; and

b. Propose to use grant funds under this program to restart one or more academically poor-performing public schools as charter schools during the project period by—

- 1. Replicating one or more high-quality charter schools based on a successful charter school model for which the applicant has provided evidence of success; and**
- 2. Targeting a demographically similar student population in the replicated charter schools as was served by the academically poor-performing public schools**

Strengths:

Applicant does not address this CPP.

Weaknesses:

Applicant does not address this CPP.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 02/12/2020 04:41 PM