

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/22/2022 07:55 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Excellence Community Schools (S282E220002)

Reader #1: \*\*\*\*\*

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Quality of the Eligible Applicant</b>		
<b>Quality of the Eligible Applicant</b>		
1. Eligible Applicant	20	16
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	35	29
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Quality of the Continuation Plan</b>		
<b>Quality of the Continuation Plan</b>		
1. Continuation Plan	10	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Quality of Project Design	10	7
<b>Need for Project</b>		
1. Need for Project	25	20
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
1. CPP1	5	2
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>79</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Developers Replication Panel - 1: 84.282E

Reader #1: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Excellence Community Schools (S282E220002)

## Questions

### Quality of the Eligible Applicant - Quality of the Eligible Applicant

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

Reader's Score: 16

#### Sub

1. (i) The extent to which the academic achievement results (including annual student performance on statewide assessments and annual student attendance and retention rates and where applicable and available, student academic growth, high school graduation rates, postsecondary enrollment and persistence rates, including in college or career training programs, employment rates, earnings and other academic outcomes) 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 (up to 5 points). (2019 NFP)

#### Strengths:

There is evidence of success in the tables presented that some schools in the network outperform state and district schools when those results are aggregated, p. e443. Data is presented for key subjects and tested grades and demonstrates relative success. Bronx Excellence 1 and 2 outperform the district and the state in several areas and subgroups, p. e443

#### Weaknesses:

This section excludes data from one of its existing schools, Bronx Excellence 4, and does not offer an explanation why as it did for Bronx Excellence 3. Academic data is not presented in aggregate as a network for schools in the same district, but by individual schools for 2 schools, p.e443.

Reader's Score: 4

2. (ii) 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 (up to 5 points). (2019 NFP)

#### Strengths:

There are no material deficiencies presented in charter regulatory compliance, p. e28

#### Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted in this factor.

Sub

Reader's Score: 5

3. (iii) 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 (up to 5 points). (2019 NFP)

**Strengths:**

There are no material financial, operational management, or student safety deficiencies, p. e28.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted in this factor.

Reader's Score: 5

4. (iv) The extent to which the schools operated or managed by the applicant demonstrate strong results on measurable outcomes in non-academic areas such as, but not limited to, parent satisfaction, school climate, student mental health, civic engagement, and crime prevention and reduction (up to 5 points). (2019 NFP)

**Strengths:**

The application is successful in that it provides positive parent satisfaction rates for its schools, p. e448.

**Weaknesses:**

The application fails to present a robust set of non-academic data like school climate, student mental health, etc. Application's non-academic measures are limited to parent satisfaction rates from 3 years ago and is insufficient to earn full points for this subfactor, p. e448. The metrics presented in the section titled non-academic measures on p. e28 are considered academic achievement results and contribute to the application's strength in subfactor 1 in this section.

Reader's Score: 2

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan**

**1. Quality of the Charter School's Management Plan**

Reader's Score: 29

Sub

1. (i) The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors: 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 (up to 5 points). (34 CFR 75.210(g)(2)(i))

**Strengths:**

The application demonstrates a full support team of personnel and organizational structures to achieve the proposed project on time and within budget. The milestones table beginning on page e32 shows a well-organized

**Sub**

approach to managing the grant and various roles to help support the work.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted for this factor.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**2. (ii) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project (up to 5 points). (34 CFR 75.210(f)(2)(iv))**

**Strengths:**

The costs presented beginning on p. e450 are reasonable and aligned to areas needed to run a school. For example, the application details costs for key personnel salaries and specifies only applying "a flat rate of \$15,000 /year for years 2 through 5," p.e450. It also successfully details equipment and supplies costs, p. e451, and contractual services, p. e452.

**Weaknesses:**

It is unclear if the costs are representative of the need for the objectives of the project or simply the financial gap. Costs were not clearly presented in this manner, p. e450.

**Reader's Score: 4**

**3. (iii) The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project (up to 5 points). (34 CFR 75.210(g)(2)(iv))**

**Strengths:**

The applicant has some strength in that they allot time the project director will spend working on this project. In this case, they intend to allot "5-10% of their time to pre-opening, launch and sustaining the new school," p. e37.

**Weaknesses:**

Does not adequately demonstrate the time key personnel will spend meeting the objectives of the proposal.

**Reader's Score: 3**

**4. (iv) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (up to 5 points). (34 CFR 75.210(e)(3)(ii))**

**Strengths:**

Key personnel's experiences and accolades are well suited to meeting the project objectives and milestones as laid out in the project plan table. Their resumes provide sufficient detail, p. e37.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted in this factor.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**5. (v) The adequacy of the applicant's plan to maintain control over all CSP grant funds (up to 5 points). (2022 NFP)**

**Sub**

**Strengths:**

The application notes successful reviews from federal monitors for their 2016 CSP award and this is sufficient evidence to receive full points for that subfactor, p. 41. In a different section, Quality of the Project Design (p. e42), the applicant details with adequacy the financial oversight controls if given this award.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted for this factor.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**6. (vi) The adequacy of the applicant's plan to make all programmatic decisions (up to 5 points). (2022 NFP)**

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides some strengths in proving their plan to make programmatic decisions. On p. e41 they note the use of "ongoing data and evaluation to assess the efficacy of the program and drive programmatic decision."

**Weaknesses:**

This application lacks explicit detail about the applicant's plan to make all programmatic decisions; it is unclear who will make which decisions and how those decisions will be made.

**Reader's Score: 2**

**7. (vii) The adequacy of the applicant's plan to administer or supervise the administration of the grant, including maintaining management and oversight responsibilities over the grant (up to 5 points). (2022 NFP)**

**Strengths:**

The application provides an account of how they managed previous grant oversight sufficiently by "adher(ing) to all regulations, fiscal controls, and fund accounting procedures for disbursement and accounting of funds" and through their maintenance of records related to CSP funds, p. e40.

**Weaknesses:**

(viii) No weakness noted in this factor.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**Quality of the Continuation Plan - Quality of the Continuation Plan**

**1. In determining the quality of the continuation plan, the Secretary considers the extent to which the eligible applicant is prepared to continue to operate the charter school that would receive grant funds in a manner consistent with the eligible applicant's application once the grant funds under this program are no longer available. (2019 NFP)**

**Strengths:**

The application describes the intention to be solvent by year 4 and gives some insight into how they make up for budget shortfall outside of public funds, (i.e., "the CMO raises funds to close the gap between our lower per pupil rates and the needs for resources"), p.e42.

**Weaknesses:**

The application fails to detail in any quantifiable way how they intend to operate the school once grant funds are no longer available, nor does it indicate how the organization has done so in the past. It mentions strategies like fundraising and using entitlement revenue, but does not explain the relationship to one another using numbers to prove Excellence is prepared to continue to operate the charter school that would receive grant funds, p. e41 and e42.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of 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 following factors:**

**Reader's Score: 7**

**Sub**

- 1. (i) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) (up to 5 points). (34 CFR 75.210(c)(2)(xxix))**

**Strengths:**

The application gives some detail that demonstrates a rationale for the project. It cites in their logic model the National Blue Ribbon Model in the inputs section, for example. P. e148.

**Weaknesses:**

The rationale shows limited information about the research that substantiates this model and is therefore not demonstrating the rationale to the fullest extent possible.

**Reader's Score: 2**

- 2. (ii) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable (up to 5 points). (34 CFR 75.210(c)(2)(i))**

**Strengths:**

There is thorough evidence of student-focused outcomes that are specific and measurable. For example, "85% of students will be at or above grade in ELA and math," p. e44.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted for this factor.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**Selection Criteria - Need for Project**

- 1. Need for the Project**

**Reader's Score: 20**

**Sub**

- 1. (i) The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project. In determining the need for the proposed project, the Secretary considers one or more of the following factors: (i) The magnitude or severity of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project (up to 15 points). (34 CFR 75.210(a)(2)(i))**

**Strengths:**

Using the table on p. e52 and their description of standard deviation plus 1, the application demonstrates an achievement gap exists in Norwalk, the area the proposed new school will be located, p. 52.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted for this factor.

**Reader's Score: 15**

- 2. (ii) The magnitude of the need for the services to be provided or the activities to be carried out by the proposed project (up to 10 points). (34 CFR 75.210(a)(2)(ii))**

**Strengths:**

The application describes the need and the activities to be carried out to address the need with some level of insight into the magnitude. The application presents the variance in performance for high need and non-high needs student groups along with other more specific categories, p. e51.

**Weaknesses:**

The application is weakened by not providing clear insight into the magnitude of the problem in that locality to understand the extent to which this project contributes to solving the problem. More detail that explicitly connects to that end is needed to receive full points.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Competitive Preference Priority 1**

- 1. Competitive Preference Priority 1—Promoting High-Quality Educator and Community-Centered Charter Schools to Support Underserved Students. (Up to 5 points).**

**1. Under this priority, an applicant must propose to open a new charter school, or to replicate or expand a high-quality charter school, that is developed and implemented—With meaningful and ongoing engagement with current or former teachers and other educators (0 or 1 point); and**

**2. Using a community-centered approach that includes an assessment of community assets, informs the development of the charter school, and includes the implementation of protocols and practices designed to ensure that the charter school will use and interact with community assets on an ongoing basis to create and maintain strong community ties. (Up to 2 points).**

**In its application, an applicant must provide a high-quality plan that demonstrates how its proposed project would meet the requirements in paragraph (a) of this priority, accompanied by a timeline for key milestones that span the course of planning, development, and**



**implementation of the charter school. (Up to 2 points).**

**Strengths:**

- (i) No strength noted in this subfactor.
- (ii) No strength noted in this subfactor.
- (iii) The applicant intends to open a school which meets the requirements and successfully demonstrates a full understanding of the planning milestones and course of action to be successful. Their plan table begins on page e32 and is robust and specific.

**Weaknesses:**

- (i) The application fails to demonstrate meaningful engagement with current or former teachers to support its expansion. It describes the work of the senior most leaders in the organization but does not capture the spirit of the competitive preference priority, p. e18.
- (ii) The application fails to clarify how the community will be involved in the development of the new school and does not describe any specific practices that are community centered, p. e19.
- (3) No weakness noted for this subfactor.

**Reader's Score:     2**

---

**Status:**           Submitted  
**Last Updated:**   08/22/2022 07:55 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/19/2022 01:59 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Excellence Community Schools (S282E220002)

**Reader #2:** \*\*\*\*\*

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Quality of the Eligible Applicant</b>		
<b>Quality of the Eligible Applicant</b>		
1. Eligible Applicant	20	16
<b>Sub Total</b>	20	16
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	35	28
<b>Sub Total</b>	35	28
<b>Quality of the Continuation Plan</b>		
<b>Quality of the Continuation Plan</b>		
1. Continuation Plan	10	7
<b>Sub Total</b>	10	7
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Quality of Project Design	10	7
<b>Need for Project</b>		
1. Need for Project	25	25
<b>Sub Total</b>	35	32
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
1. CPP1	5	4
<b>Sub Total</b>	5	4
<b>Total</b>	105	87

# Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Developers Replication Panel - 1: 84.282E

Reader #2: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Excellence Community Schools (S282E220002)

## Questions

### Quality of the Eligible Applicant - Quality of the Eligible Applicant

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

Reader's Score: 16

#### Sub

- (i) The extent to which the academic achievement results (including annual student performance on statewide assessments and annual student attendance and retention rates and where applicable and available, student academic growth, high school graduation rates, postsecondary enrollment and persistence rates, including in college or career training programs, employment rates, earnings and other academic outcomes) 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 (up to 5 points). (2019 NFP)**

#### Strengths:

i. The applicant clearly presented academic achievement data for ELA and math (grades 3-8) for the school to demonstrate that the school managed by the applicant is performing higher than the NYC public schools (p.e445-e446). Disaggregated ethnic/race data (p.e447 and p.e449) was provided to demonstrate the applicant's commitment to serving educationally disadvantaged students. For example, the average score for ELA grades 3-8 is 65 compared to 47.4 for NYC public schools, and the average score for math is 69 compared to 45.6 for NYC public schools. Retention (e.g., 88 for the school year 2021-22) and average daily attendance (e.g., 94 for the school year 2021-22) data were provided for four school years (2018-2022) (p.e450). The applicant also provided information about the high school regents exam passing rate of 90.3% for the school year 2018-19 (p.e446).

#### Weaknesses:

i. The applicant did not clearly articulate the possible reason(s) for the decrease of the retention rate from 96% in 2018-19 to 94% in 2021-22 (p.e450) and the decrease in the average of high school regents' exam passing rate from 99% in the school year 2016-17 to 90.3% in average in the school year 2018-19 (p.e446).

Reader's Score: 3

- (ii) 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 (up to 5 points). (2019 NFP)**

#### Strengths:

ii. The applicant clearly stated that none of the schools that ECS supports or manages have been closed, have had a charter revoked, or had any official affiliations terminated (p.e28).

**Sub**

**Weaknesses:**

- ii. No weakness noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

- 3. (iii) **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 (up to 5 points). (2019 NFP)**

**Strengths:**

- iii. The applicant clearly stated that none of the schools have had any significant issues in the areas of financial or operational management or student safety, or experienced issues with statutory or regulatory compliance that could lead to charter revocation (p.e28).

**Weaknesses:**

- iii. No weakness noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

- 4. (iv) **The extent to which the schools operated or managed by the applicant demonstrate strong results on measurable outcomes in non-academic areas such as, but not limited to, parent satisfaction, school climate, student mental health, civic engagement, and crime prevention and reduction (up to 5 points). (2019 NFP)**

**Strengths:**

- iv. The applicant presented parent satisfaction rates for the school year 2018-19 (e.g., 92%) as evidence of the success of the managed schools (p.e450).

**Weaknesses:**

- iv. The applicant provided parent satisfaction rates to demonstrate strong outcomes. The limited information presented about other important aspects of schooling (e.g., such as school climate, student mental health, civic engagement, and student suspension) do not allow the assessment of measurable outcomes in non-academic areas.

**Reader's Score: 3**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan**

**1. Quality of the Charter School's Management Plan**

**Reader's Score: 28**

**Sub**

- 1. (i) **The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors: The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including**

Sub

**clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks (up to 5 points). (34 CFR 75.210(g)(2)(i))**

**Strengths:**

i. The applicant provided an organizational chart (p.e143 and e341) to demonstrate their ability to manage the implementation of the proposed project. The applicant presented a description, of the ECS responsibility and Bronx Replication School's Responsibility (p.e144-e145) to evidence a clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities to implement the proposed project. The applicant stated the Chief Financial Officer's (CFO) responsibilities are the financial and HR aspects; Chief Operating Officer's (COO) purview includes student recruitment and enrollment, compliance, development, and technology; the Director of Teaching and Learning (CAOs) oversees all instructional-related activities and development; Co-Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who provides guidance, training, and supervision (p.e30). The applicant offered information connecting tasks/activities to milestones, timeframe, and person/team responsibility based on the stage of implementation phases (p.e32-e34). The applicant adequately defined the responsibilities of the leadership, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks of the proposed project.

**Weaknesses:**

i. No weakness noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**2. (ii) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project (up to 5 points). (34 CFR 75.210(f)(2)(iv))**

**Strengths:**

ii. The applicant requested a total of \$1,497,317 per year (p.e5) to support the implementation of the proposed project. The applicant also indicated that projections for New York and Connecticut general and special education per pupil funding, Title I and II grants and IDEA funding with no assumed increase in rates, (p.e34) were considered (\$1,848,000 (p.e392)) for the total budget calculation of \$2,206,926 for one year of operation. (p.e392). The applicant provided limited information to justify the reasonableness of the cost of the proposed project.

**Weaknesses:**

ii. It is unclear if the requested amount is reasonable when the difference between per-pupil revenue (\$1,848,000 (p.e392)) and the total requested for year 1 is less than the requested amount. In other words, the financial request for the proposed project is more than the financial gap. The applicant did not clearly indicate the cost per pupil to assess the reasonableness of the request.

**Reader's Score: 3**

**3. (iii) The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project (up to 5 points). (34 CFR 75.210(g)(2)(iv))**

**Strengths:**

iii. The applicant clearly indicated that key personnel would allot approximately 5-10% of their time to the pre-opening, launch, and sustaining of the new school (p.e37). The applicant minimally addressed the adequacy of the allotted time to meet the objectives of the proposed project.

**Weaknesses:**

iii. The applicant indicated the FTE of the project director to be dedicated to the project as 5%, which is not enough to oversee the implementation of the proposed project (p.e37).

Sub

Reader's Score: 3

4. (iv) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (up to 5 points). (34 CFR 75.210€(3)(ii))

**Strengths:**

iv. The applicant clearly indicated that qualifications of the relevant personnel such as the Co-CEO and Founder of Excellence Community Schools (e.g., 24 years of experience as an educator, a BA in Political Science, and an Ed.M. in Elementary Education), Chief Real Estate Officer with experience in compliance with the department of education in New York, CFO has experience with finance and operations in schools and corporate, Elementary School CAO has experience in education for 16 years, Middle School CAO has 24 years of experience in educational settings (e.g., teacher and principal), COO with 26 years of experience in education (p.e37-e41). The applicant also provided job descriptions for key personnel to be hired (p.e357-e370) and some resumes of the leadership (p.e328-e338).

**Weaknesses:**

iv. No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 5

5. (v) The adequacy of the applicant's plan to maintain control over all CSP grant funds (up to 5 points). (2022 NFP)

**Strengths:**

v. The applicant provided sufficient detailed information about the Financial Policies and Procedures Manual (p.e396-e433) to demonstrate their ability to maintain control over the financial funding received from grants. For example, financial reporting would include federal grants (p.e402). The applicant provided adequate information to demonstrate their ability to maintain control over all CSP grant funds.

**Weaknesses:**

v. No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 5

6. (vi) The adequacy of the applicant's plan to make all programmatic decisions (up to 5 points). (2022 NFP)

**Strengths:**

vi. The applicant clearly specified that ongoing data and evaluation to assess the efficacy of the program and drive programmatic decisions (p.e41). Moreover, it was indicated that a clear organizational structure of staff, systems, and procedures are in place to support the daily operations of the school (p.e60). The applicant minimally addressed programmatic decisions of the proposed project.

**Weaknesses:**

vi. The applicant did not clearly provide information about the programmatic decisions or monitoring process of the proposed project. The vague information provided about the roles of the leadership is not sufficient to evidence the protocols of decision-making to follow.

Reader's Score: 2

7. (vii) The adequacy of the applicant's plan to administer or supervise the administration of the grant, including maintaining management and oversight responsibilities over the

**Sub**

**grant (up to 5 points). (2022 NFP)**

**Strengths:**

vii. The applicant provided a statement of assurances (p.e439-e443) from the Connecticut Department of Education regarding the management of grant funds. The applicant adequately provided information to demonstrate their ability to administer or supervise the administration of the grant, including maintaining management and oversight responsibilities over the grant.

**Weaknesses:**

vii. No weakness noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**Quality of the Continuation Plan - Quality of the Continuation Plan**

**1. In determining the quality of the continuation plan, the Secretary considers the extent to which the eligible applicant is prepared to continue to operate the charter school that would receive grant funds in a manner consistent with the eligible applicant's application once the grant funds under this program are no longer available. (2019 NFP)**

**Strengths:**

The applicant clearly specified that the funds are intended to supplement the needs of the proposed project (p.e41-e42). The applicant clearly stated that to operate the proposed project after the grant funds are no longer available, a combination of the public per pupil, entitlement revenue, private donations from philanthropic groups, and competitive grant funding would be utilized to continue supporting the proposed project. It was estimated based on prior experiences that the proposed school would become solvent in approximately the fourth year of operation (p.e42). The applicant limited information to demonstrate that the proposed project would continue to operate the charter school after the grant funds are no longer available.

**Weaknesses:**

The application did not quantify the information to operationalize the proposed project after the grant funds would not be longer available. The applicant did not provide evidence about the success of the CMO raising funds to support the proposed project (p.e42).

**Reader's Score: 7**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of 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 following factors:**

**Reader's Score: 7**

**Sub**

**1. (i) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) (up to 5 points). (34 CFR 75.210(c)(2)(xxix))**

**Sub**

**Strengths:**

i. The applicant provided a logic model (p.e148) connecting inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes (short-, mid-, and long-term). The National Blue Ribbon Award-winning program model was indicated under the inputs (p. e148). The applicant clearly demonstrated the rationale of the proposed project by indicating that the program model (National Blue-Ribbon model) as part of the logic model.

**Weaknesses:**

i. The applicant provided limited information about the research or evaluation finding informing a key project component (National Blue Ribbon model) included in the proposed project's logic model to demonstrate the likelihood of achieving relevant outcomes. Specifically, limited information (research or evaluation findings) of the National Blue-Ribbon model that suggest the project component is likely to improve relevant outcomes was not provided.

**Reader's Score: 2**

**2. (ii) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable (up to 5 points). (34 CFR 75.210(c)(2)(i))**

**Strengths:**

ii. The applicant clearly connected the goals/objectives to outcomes, and measures (p.e43-e44). The evaluation component, measurable objectives, activity, and data were clearly presented, which would allow the monitoring of the proposed project by the project director (p.e44-e45). For example, under academic achievement, the objective would be "85% of students will be at or above grade in ELA and Math" by utilizing activities such as the teaching of foundational skills, exposure to quality literature, and text-based comprehension and collecting data (e.g., Unit Benchmarks, Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) Reading Assessments, Measure of Academic Progress Assessment, and State Standardized Tests). Qualitative (e.g., student achievement data) and quantitative (e.g., Interviews of staff, students, and parents) data would be collected to inform the progress of the proposed project (p. e45). The organizational goals such as Professional development for teachers and student achievement were clearly explained to support the desired outcomes (p.e45e-e51). Therefore, the applicant specified project goals to outcomes, measures, and measurable objectives.

**Weaknesses:**

ii. No weakness noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**Selection Criteria - Need for Project**

**1. Need for the Project**

**Reader's Score: 25**

**Sub**

**1. (i) The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project. In determining the need for the proposed project, the Secretary considers one or more of the following factors: (i) The magnitude or severity of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project (up to 15 points). (34 CFR 75.210(a)(2)(i))**



**Sub**

**Strengths:**

i. The applicant clearly demonstrated the needs to be addressed due to underperforming academics in the Norwalk Public Schools by providing ELA, math, and Science performance index gaps comparing students with non-high needs rates to high needs rates and disaggregated data by groups (i.e., Asian, African Americans, etc.) (p.e51-e62). For example, elementary school high need students are lagging compared to their non-high needs' peers in ELA (59.3 compared to 75.0), math (54.9 compared to 72.6), and science (52.8 compared to 66.5). Disaggregated data evidenced the gaps as well due to the percentage of students in grades 3 and 4 performing lower when compared to the state.

**Weaknesses:**

i. No weakness noted.

**Reader's Score: 15**

**2. (ii) The magnitude of the need for the services to be provided or the activities to be carried out by the proposed project (up to 10 points). (34 CFR 75.210(a)(2)(ii))**

**Strengths:**

ii. The applicant clearly explained the different activities to be performed to implement the proposed project successfully (p.e51-e62) such as the development of a culture of caring, collaboration, and accountability, and transformative education (e.g., high academic standards; Data-driven instruction and flexible groupings; and Parent engagement) to eliminate the economic isolation. The magnitude of the needs presented would be addressed by the proposed activities in the target area.

**Weaknesses:**

ii. No weakness noted.

**Reader's Score: 10**

**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Competitive Preference Priority 1**

**1. Competitive Preference Priority 1—Promoting High-Quality Educator and Community-Centered Charter Schools to Support Underserved Students. (Up to 5 points).**

1. Under this priority, an applicant must propose to open a new charter school, or to replicate or expand a high-quality charter school, that is developed and implemented—With meaningful and ongoing engagement with current or former teachers and other educators (0 or 1 point); and

2. Using a community-centered approach that includes an assessment of community assets, informs the development of the charter school, and includes the implementation of protocols and practices designed to ensure that the charter school will use and interact with community assets on an ongoing basis to create and maintain strong community ties. (Up to 2 points).

In its application, an applicant must provide a high-quality plan that demonstrates how its proposed project would meet the requirements in paragraph (a) of this priority, accompanied by a timeline for key milestones that span the course of planning, development, and implementation of the charter school. (Up to 2 points).

**Strengths:**

1. The applicant clearly indicated that the proposed project is to replicate a school in Connecticut and the funding would support the school's planning, opening, and continued expansion throughout the five-year grant term (p.e17). The proposed project includes the input of five leadership members who are trained educators and worked in educational settings (p.e18).
2. The applicant detailed the struggles that the community faces to meet the needs of the children with high high-quality educational programs (p.e19) to demonstrate the assessment of the condition of the community to develop the proposed charter school. For example, persistent dangerous schools and underperforming school (p.e19)
3. The applicant clearly provided milestones connected to the tasks/activities, timeframe, and the team responsible (p.e32-e34) to implement the proposed project to achieve the desired goals and objectives. The applicant described the implementation plan to meet the needs of students with disabilities (p.e276) and the continued engagement to see partnerships to support the proposed project (p.e20).

**Weaknesses:**

1. No weakness noted.
2. The applicant provided limited information about the assessment of community assets to inform the development and implementation process to meet the needs of the community and maintain strong community ties.
3. No weakness noted.

**Reader's Score:** 4

---

**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 08/19/2022 01:59 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/20/2022 04:54 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Excellence Community Schools (S282E220002)

**Reader #3:** \*\*\*\*\*

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Quality of the Eligible Applicant</b>		
<b>Quality of the Eligible Applicant</b>		
1. Eligible Applicant	20	16
<b>Sub Total</b>	20	16
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	35	29
<b>Sub Total</b>	35	29
<b>Quality of the Continuation Plan</b>		
<b>Quality of the Continuation Plan</b>		
1. Continuation Plan	10	7
<b>Sub Total</b>	10	7
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Quality of Project Design	10	7
<b>Need for Project</b>		
1. Need for Project	25	25
<b>Sub Total</b>	35	32
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
1. CPP1	5	4
<b>Sub Total</b>	5	4
<b>Total</b>	105	88

# Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Developers Replication Panel - 1: 84.282E

Reader #3: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Excellence Community Schools (S282E220002)

## Questions

### Quality of the Eligible Applicant - Quality of the Eligible Applicant

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

Reader's Score: 16

#### Sub

1. (i) The extent to which the academic achievement results (including annual student performance on statewide assessments and annual student attendance and retention rates and where applicable and available, student academic growth, high school graduation rates, postsecondary enrollment and persistence rates, including in college or career training programs, employment rates, earnings and other academic outcomes) 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 (up to 5 points). (2019 NFP)

#### Strengths:

The applicant provided mostly compelling grades 3-8 academic achievement data for both ELA and math for the Bronx 1 and 2 schools which illustrated how the schools managed by the applicant academically outperformed NYC public schools. Disaggregated subgroup data was provided by race and ethnicity which served to highlight the applicant's strong commitment to serving educationally disadvantaged students. As an example, the average score for ELA grades 3 through 8 was 65% (Bronx 1) and 92% (Bronx 2) as compared to 45% for NY state public schools; in math, the average score for math was 69% (Bronx 1) and 95% (Bronx 2) as compared to 49% for NY state public schools. In addition, retention rates were also provided for the four years. As a comparative example, for 2021-22 school year as 88% (Bronx 1) for the school year; average daily attendance was 94% for the school year. The applicant provided trend data for a four-year span data - 2018-2022. (e445-448; 450)

#### Weaknesses:

The high school (HS) Regent's exam data was addressed with a passing rate of 90.3% for the school year 2018-19, 98% for the school year 2017-18, and 99% for the school year 2016-17. However, the decrease in scores from the previous years to 2018 was not adequately explained. In addition, Bronx 4 data was not reported, thus aggregate data for the CMO was not accurately reported. (e445-448; 450)

Reader's Score: 3

2. (ii) 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 (up to 5 points). (2019 NFP)

**Sub**

**Strengths:**

The applicant clearly provided that no ECS network schools it manages have been closed. In addition, the network has not had a charter revoked, or experienced terminations of any kind. This is appropriate. (e28)

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

3. (iii) **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 (up to 5 points). (2019 NFP)**

**Strengths:**

The applicant explicitly provided that none of the network schools have experienced any significant financial issues, any incidences of operational mismanagement, or any student safety concerns. In addition, the applicant reported that the network has not been cited for any statutory or regulatory compliance issues that have resulted in charter revocation of any kind. This is adequate. (e28)

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

4. (iv) **The extent to which the schools operated or managed by the applicant demonstrate strong results on measurable outcomes in non-academic areas such as, but not limited to, parent satisfaction, school climate, student mental health, civic engagement, and crime prevention and reduction (up to 5 points). (2019 NFP)**

**Strengths:**

The applicant provided limited non-academic data. For example, the applicant provided parental satisfaction rates for the 2018-19 school year of 92% as evidence of strong success of the managed schools. This is partially sufficient. (e450)

**Weaknesses:**

Non-academic data was not provided sufficiently in multiple areas to warrant demonstration of strong outcomes. For example, other important aspects of schooling as indices of strong outcomes were not addressed such as school climate, student mental health, examples of civic engagement, and student suspension rates. The paucity of information did not allow for a sufficient assessment of measurable outcomes in appropriate non-academic areas. (e450)

**Reader's Score: 3**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan**

**1. Quality of the Charter School's Management Plan**

Reader's Score: 29

Sub

1. (i) **The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors: 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 (up to 5 points). (34 CFR 75.210(g)(2)(i))**

**Strengths:**

The applicant presented an organizational chart which illustrated the network's ability to manage implementation of the proposed project. The applicant provided adequate description of the ECS responsibility and the Bronx Replication Schools' responsibilities. Distinct delineation of the roles, expectations, and responsibilities to implement the proposed project were provided. As example of this delineation, the Chief Financial Officer's (CFO) responsibilities are financial issues and human resource aspects; Chief Operating Officer's (COO) roles includes student recruitment, enrollment, compliance, and technology, while the Director of Teaching and Learning (CAOs) is responsible for all instructional activities. The applicant provided information that aligned activities to milestones, an adequate timeframe, and responsible personnel. The applicant approximately delineated leadership responsibilities for successfully addressing the proposed project's tasks. (e 32-34; 143-145; 341)

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

2. (ii) **The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project (up to 5 points). (34 CFR 75.210(f)(2)(iv))**

**Strengths:**

The applicant allocated funds of \$1,497,317 per year to achieve implementation of the proposed project. The applicant also provided general and special education students' projections for both New York and Connecticut presenting per pupil funding, Title I and II grants, and federal IDEA funding. No projected increases in rates from all sources equaled a total budget allocation of \$2,206,926 for one year of operation. This is partially sufficient. (e 5; 34; 392)

**Weaknesses:**

Actual costs per pupil were not provided as part of the applicant's proposed plan. As such, it was difficult to ascertain the reasonableness of the requested amount. For instance, there is a discrepancy between the difference between per-pupil revenue streams listed as \$1,848,000 and the total amount requested for year 1. (e392)

Reader's Score: 4

3. (iii) **The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project (up to 5 points). (34 CFR 75.210(g)(2)(iv))**

**Strengths:**

The applicant appropriately provided that key personnel would designate between 5-10% of their time to the proposed project. This is a somewhat sufficient allocation of time for the project's preplanning, launch, and implementation of the new school. (e37)

**Sub**

**Weaknesses:**

2.3 Given the scope of responsibilities for the project director, an FTE of 5% is questionable in terms of adequacy. For example, the duties and responsibilities associated with implementation of the proposed project, 5% is not sufficient. (e37)

**Reader's Score: 3**

**4. (iv) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (up to 5 points). (34 CFR 75.210€(3)(ii))**

**Strengths:**

Qualifications of key, relevant personnel were provided appropriately. As an example, the Co-CEO and Founder of ECS possesses 24 years of educator experience, has an earned BA in Political Science, and an Ed.M. in Elementary Education. As another example, the CFO has appropriate experience with finance and operations in schools and the corporate arena. Both the Elementary School CAO and the Middle School CAO have multiple years' experience in education as teachers and principals. In addition, job descriptions for key personnel yet to be hired were also provided. CVs were also provided as part of the applicant's proposed plan. (e328-338; 357-370)

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**5. (v) The adequacy of the applicant's plan to maintain control over all CSP grant funds (up to 5 points). (2022 NFP)**

**Strengths:**

The application provided the Financial Policies and Procedures Manual which included sufficient attention to financial issues to satisfy the applicant's ability to provide guidance and maintain control over significant grant funding received from grants. Financial reporting sufficiently addressed the management of federal grants. (e396-433)

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**6. (vi) The adequacy of the applicant's plan to make all programmatic decisions (up to 5 points). (2022 NFP)**

**Strengths:**

A clear organizational structure of staff, systems, policies, and procedures were presented. The structure and organization exist to support the school's day-to-day operations. (e41; 60)

**Weaknesses:**

Programmatic decision-making and monitoring were not addressed in adequate detail. Additional detail is warranted to determine the adequacy of the proposed plan's programmatic decision-making and monitoring. (e41; 60)

**Reader's Score: 2**

**7. (vii) The adequacy of the applicant's plan to administer or supervise the administration of**

**Sub**

**the grant, including maintaining management and oversight responsibilities over the grant (up to 5 points). (2022 NFP)**

**Strengths:**

As evidence of the applicant's ability to manage grant funds, a statement of assurances from the Connecticut Department of Education (DOE) was provided. This was appropriate as the DOE has oversight for all state charter schools. (e439-e443)

**Weaknesses:**

2.5 No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**Quality of the Continuation Plan - Quality of the Continuation Plan**

**1. In determining the quality of the continuation plan, the Secretary considers the extent to which the eligible applicant is prepared to continue to operate the charter school that would receive grant funds in a manner consistent with the eligible applicant's application once the grant funds under this program are no longer available. (2019 NFP)**

**Strengths:**

The applicant provided a sound explanation as to how funds will be used to supplement the proposed project. The applicant addressed that blending of several revenue streams would be used. Examples of funding streams and sources included public per pupil funding, entitlement revenue, private monies, philanthropic donations, and additional competitive grant funding. Based on previous experiences, the applicant estimated that by the fourth year, the proposed school would be solvent. (e41-42).

**Weaknesses:**

The application failed to adequately provide a viable plan to sustain operation of the proposed project after the grant funding expired. No data was provided regarding how the school site would continue beyond the life of the grant. For example, it is unclear what estimated dollar amounts the CEO would raise; thus, it was unclear given the lack of evidence what projected amount would be raised. (e41-42)

**Reader's Score: 7**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of 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 following factors:**

**Reader's Score: 7**

**Sub**

**1. (i) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) (up to 5 points). (34 CFR 75.210(c)(2)(xxix))**



**Sub**

**Strengths:**

The applicant provided a logic model which included inputs, activities, outputs, and short-term, mid-term, and long-term outcomes. Inputs included reference to the National Blue Ribbon Award-winning program model, which is a strength. This is partially adequate (e148)

**Weaknesses:**

The referenced National Blue Ribbon Award-winning program did not include sufficient information. For instance, it was unclear what this programs' evaluation plan or research findings were as per the narrative description. (e148)

**Reader's Score: 2**

- 2. (ii) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable (up to 5 points). (34 CFR 75.210(c)(2)(i))**

**Strengths:**

As part of the applicant's proposed plan, goals and objectives were clearly aligned to outcomes, and measures (p. e43-e44). Thus, monitoring of the proposed project by the project director is a viable plan. Regarding academic achievement, the objective was: 85% of students will be at or above grade in ELA and Math. This is proposed to be accomplished by teaching of foundational skills, access to quality literature, and text-based comprehension, and adequate data collection. The use of Fountas and Pinnell's Reading Assessments is an example of an appropriate instrument. Organizational goals were addressed sufficiently such as professional development for teachers and student achievement, which were adequately explained as the means to achieve outcomes. (e43-45; 51)

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**Selection Criteria - Need for Project**

**1. Need for the Project**

**Reader's Score: 25**

**Sub**

- 1. (i) The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project. In determining the need for the proposed project, the Secretary considers one or more of the following factors: (i) The magnitude or severity of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project (up to 15 points). (34 CFR 75.210(a)(2)(i))**

**Strengths:**

The applicant adequately established the need of the academic problem to be addressed in the Norwalk Public Schools as evidenced by ELA, math, and science performance gaps. For example, comparison data and subgroup data were provided in sufficient detail. As a finite example, elementary high need students are underperforming at 59.3% compared to their non-high needs' peers in ELA at 75% and in math with high needs at 54.9% versus 72.6%. Additionally, elementary high needs students' science performance was 52.8% compared to non-high needs elementary students at 66.5%. Clearly, need was established in sufficient detail. (e51-e62)

**Sub**

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 15**

**2. (ii) The magnitude of the need for the services to be provided or the activities to be carried out by the proposed project (up to 10 points). (34 CFR 75.210(a)(2)(ii))**

**Strengths:**

In terms of magnitude, the applicant provided abundant detail regarding different activities to implement the proposed project adequately. Examples of detail include descriptions of how development of a culture of caring, collaboration, accountability, and high academic standards. In addition, data-driven instruction and flexible groupings, and parental engagement were discussed sufficiently as mechanisms to address and ameliorate economic isolation. (e51-e62)

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 10**

**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Competitive Preference Priority 1**

**1. Competitive Preference Priority 1—Promoting High-Quality Educator and Community-Centered Charter Schools to Support Underserved Students. (Up to 5 points).**

**1. Under this priority, an applicant must propose to open a new charter school, or to replicate or expand a high-quality charter school, that is developed and implemented—With meaningful and ongoing engagement with current or former teachers and other educators (0 or 1 point); and**

**2. Using a community-centered approach that includes an assessment of community assets, informs the development of the charter school, and includes the implementation of protocols and practices designed to ensure that the charter school will use and interact with community assets on an ongoing basis to create and maintain strong community ties. (Up to 2 points).**

**In its application, an applicant must provide a high-quality plan that demonstrates how its proposed project would meet the requirements in paragraph (a) of this priority, accompanied by a timeline for key milestones that span the course of planning, development, and implementation of the charter school. (Up to 2 points).**

**Strengths:**

1. The applicant, Excellence Community Schools (ECS), aptly provided that the proposed project is designed to establish and expand the Norwalk Excellence School in Connecticut in the fall of 2023. Grant funding would directly support the school's planning, opening, and continued expansion throughout the term of the five-year grant. The proposed project includes five experienced educators as part of a seven-member core leadership team, many of whom possess start-up training expertise. As former educators, the team has the expertise to replicate the CMO's model of excellence, expanding by 336 student seats. These team members were instrumental in the success of the Bronx Excellence schools. (e17-18)

2. The applicant clearly identified compelling community challenges, such as persistently failing schools, that impact meeting the needs of the community's children. The application proposes high-quality educational programs intended to ameliorate challenges and meet community students' needs, which, in turn, can reinvigorate the community through engagement with families. References to community input were limited. (e18-20)

3. The applicant provided clear milestones associated and aligned with the proposed activities, timeframe, and the team members tasked with the responsibilities to implement the proposed project. Milestones are designed to achieve the desired goals and objectives of the applicant's proposed plan. The applicant specifically detailed the implementation plan, created to meet the needs of students with disabilities as well as to encourage engagement with partnerships to support the proposed project. (e20-21; 32-34; 276)

**Weaknesses:**

1 No weaknesses noted.

2 Assessment of community input was not demonstrated satisfactorily. While the applicant stated that the CMO is community-centered, the application failed to include narrative evidence that described community input on this specific proposed plan in a satisfactory fashion. (e18-20)

3 No weaknesses noted

**Reader's Score:** 4

---

**Status:** Submitted

**Last Updated:** 08/20/2022 04:54 PM