

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Equitable Financing

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Equitable Financing

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which the State in which it is located ensures equitable financing, as compared to traditional public schools, for charter schools and students in a prompt manner.

Strengths:

The applicant provides an adequate response describing the state's efforts to ensure equitable financing (e26-18). The applicant cites relevant code {RCS 28A.710.280(1)} authenticating its statement that state law requires equitable state funding that includes funding based on student characteristics, also known as differentiated aid (e26-27). Furthermore, the State of Washington considers charter schools to function as LEAs and therefore are eligible for any competitive grant for schools or LEA supports (e27). The response offers examples of supports that the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the applicant provide which include training and technical assistance to ensure charters know how to access federal and state categorical funds, and assistance in knowing how to apply for other public funds such as 21st Century Community Learning Center (21stCCLC) grants (e28).

Weaknesses:

While the applicant provides an adequate response, there are some weaknesses in regard to equitable and prompt financing. The applicant states that charters have applied for and received funds such as 21stCCLC but the response lacks evidence to document this statement (e28). The application lacks specificity in regards to demonstrating that the state ensures equity as compared to traditional public schools. For example, this response does not include information such as the state foundation per pupil funding that charters and traditional public schools receive. The application lacks clarity in regard to prompt financing. The applicant provides a statement that there have been "no instances of charters not receiving state or federal funds promptly" (e27). However, the response does not include evidence, such as state law or funding schedule for charters and traditional districts, to clearly document payment promptness and equity.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Charter School Facilities

1. Competitive Preference Priority 3: Charter School Facilities

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which the State in which it is located provides charter schools one or more of the following:

- a) **Funding for facilities;**
- b) **Assistance with facilities acquisition;**
- c) **Access to public facilities;**
- d) **The ability to share in bonds or mill levies;**
- e) **The right of first refusal to purchase public school buildings; or**
- f) **Low- or no-cost leasing privileges.**

Strengths:

The applicant adequately describes the extent to which the state provides facility supports for charters as it provides evidence of one or more ways that the state supports charter school facilities and relevant law citations are included within the response (e28-30). Washington state provides three avenues of facilities support for charter schools: state law {RCW 28A.710.230 (1)} provides charter schools with the ability to apply for construction funding; access to public facilities is formalized through the state charter law {E2SSB 6194}; and, right of first refusal to purchase public school buildings is codified through {RCW 28A.335.040}.

Weaknesses:

While the applicant adequately describes the state's facilities supports, there are some weaknesses identified. Each of the citations listed above lack evidence describing the extent to which charters are able to access these resources. For example, even though state law permits charters to apply for construction funds, there is no evidence provided in this response, such as the percent of charters that have applied for and received this funding, in comparison to traditional LEA success in obtaining such funds. Also, while the applicant describes its role in assisting charters with facility acquisition, the prompt requires analysis of the extent to which the State of Washington provides this support, such as information about how this organization works in partnership with the state and/or other partners within the application. It is also unclear the extent to which this organization serves statewide and provides equitable services that are accessible across the sector.

Reader's Score: **2**

Competitive Preference Priority 4 - Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools/LEAs**1. Competitive Preference Priority 4: Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools and Local Educational Agencies**

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which the State in which it is located uses best practices from charter schools to help improve struggling schools and local educational agencies.

Strengths:

The applicant provides an adequately developed response addressing how the State of Washington uses best practices from charter schools to help improve struggling schools and LEAs, even though the charter initiative is only five years old. Two years ago, the Rural Alliance, which serves 70 rural LEAs, invited charters to participate in their annual conference. Rural districts learned about the Summit Learning Platform which is used in three Summit Public Schools in Washington and many more schools across the nation. There are now 14 schools in seven districts using this platform to personalize learning for their students (e31). Last year, the Washington State Charter School Commission (The Commission) and State Board of Education (SBE) were invited to present charter best practices as the Statewide Education Research Association conference (e31). This past year, the SBE adopted the Washington School Improvement Framework (WSIF) which is to be the universal statewide improvement framework. This new framework will not be a shift for charters because Washington charter schools have been using the Charter Academic Performance Framework which includes the same processes for three years (e31-32).

Weaknesses:

The response is not fully developed because the applicant does not clearly describe the role of state leadership in using best practices of charters to improve struggling charters AND traditional schools. While the applicant cited many examples of the use of best practices, they were non-profits or other organizations. This does not provide clear evidence of how the State of Washington is working to disseminate best practices.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 5 - Serving At-Risk Students

1. Competitive Preference Priority 5: Serving At-Risk Students

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which it supports charter schools that serve at-risk students through activities such as dropout prevention, dropout recovery, or comprehensive career counseling services

Strengths:

The applicant's response is fully developed and clearly describes how it supports charters that serve at risk students. The applicant cites relevant state law that requires charters and authorizers to support and have a preference for serving at-risk students {E2SSB 6194 Sec 107, RCW 28A.710.070} and states that Washington Charter Schools Association (WA Charters) aligns all of its incubation and technical assistance services to this expectation (e32). The applicant follows with specific evidence describing examples of this work. WA Charters offers a charter incubation program and robust technical assistance (TA) to support school founders and leaders in providing inclusive and responsive education (e35). The True Measure Collaborative (TMC) supports schools to meet the unique needs of underserved populations. This project helps schools ensure their students with disabilities receive highly inclusive education, have responsive individual education plans (IEPs) and strong post-graduation plans (e36). Stanford University documented the success of this effort in a recent CREDO study which reported that while, overall, WA state charter students perform on par with traditional districts, the English learning (EL) student growth is considerably higher in charter schools (e34). Additionally, WA Charters created access for all charters to an early warning system for dropout prevention (e36). WA Charters also provides all schools with a free subscription to Washington Assessment of Risks and Needs of Students reports and provides training on best practices aligned to this research (e36). Finally, in 2017, the state legislature began requiring all schools with over 300 students to partner with local courts to offer Community Truancy Boards and WA Charters facilitates the boards for charters across the state (e36).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority 6 - Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing

1. Competitive Preference Priority 6: Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which it has taken steps to ensure that all authorized public chartering agencies implement best practices for charter school authorizing.

Strengths:

The applicant's response is well developed and provides strong evidence describing how WA Charters works to ensure two of the three best practices for authorizing in accordance with Assurance E. From its inception, WA Charters, The Commission, SBE, Spokane Public Schools (SPS), and OSPI have been active partners leading legislative efforts to ensure the State of Washington uses best practices for authorizing high-quality charts and providing effective oversight of charter schools (e37). These partners worked closely with National Association for Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) during the first four years of the charter initiative to ensure state law aligned with best practices. This is evidenced by state law {RCW 28A.710.100}which requires authorizers to implement 'policies and practices consistent with' at least five of NACSA's principles and standards for quality charter authorization. At minimum, authorizers must align to: organization

capacity and infrastructure, charter application, performance contracts, oversight and evaluation, and charter renewal (e37). As a result of this strong alignment for each of the last two years, the State of Washington's charter law has been ranked 3rd in the nation by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS) (e22). Also, NACSA gave the state 30/30 on its 2014 evaluation, which is the highest score possible among states with few authorizers (e36).

WA Charters has also partnered with both authorizers (the Commission and SPS) and the SBE to ensure both authorizers are using NACSA best practices for monitoring and oversight (e41). This was evidenced by WA Charters facilitating the early collection of stakeholder input into the development of the Charter Academic Performance Framework (Framework) and provided most of the early onboarding and planning supports for schools implementing the Framework in 2014 (e41). This framework provides the foundation for annual performance data and reporting for schools. WA charters continues to co-plan onboarding with the Commission and OPSI and annually provides input regarding recommendations for improvements to the authorizer monitoring process.

Weaknesses:

The Notice Inviting Applications identified that best practices should demonstrate evidence of meeting Assurance E. Assurance E has three components, one of which was to provide TA to support authorizer to improve authorizers ability to monitor independent financial audit of schools. This response lacks evidence describing how WA Charters provides support to authorizers regarding monitoring of the independent financial audit of charter schools.

Reader's Score: **3**

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