

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/22/2017 03:35 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Minnesota Department of Education (U282A170007)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection criteria</b>		
<b>Flexibility</b>		
1. Flexibility	10	9
<b>Sub Total</b>	10	9
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Objectives</b>		
1. Objectives	15	14
<b>Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants</b>		
1. Quality of Subgrant	15	13
<b>State Plan</b>		
1. State Plan	20	19
<b>Parent and Community Involvement</b>		
1. Involvement	10	7
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	15	13
<b>Quality of the Management Plan, Theory of Action</b>		
1. Management Plan	15	12
<b>Sub Total</b>	90	78
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
<b>Periodic Review and Evaluation</b>		
1. Review and Evaluation	5	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	5	0
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
<b>Charter School Oversight</b>		
1. Charter School Oversight	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	5	5
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 3</b>		
<b>Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process</b>		
1. Authorizer other than LEA	2	2
<b>Sub Total</b>	2	2

**Competitive Preference Priority 4**

**Equitable Financing**

1. Equitable Financing	2	2
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority 5**

**Charter School Facilities**

1. Charter School Facilities	2	1
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority 6**

**Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools/LEAs**

1. Struggling Schools	2	1
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority 7**

**Serving At-Risk Students**

1. Serving At-Risk Students	2	1
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority 8**

**Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing**

1. Best Practices	5	3
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>

<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>102</b>
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# Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - Panel 7 - Minnesota - 1: 84.282A

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

Applicant: Minnesota Department of Education (U282A170007)

## Questions

### Selection criteria - Flexibility

1. **The degree of flexibility afforded by the State's charter school law and how the State entity will work to maximize the flexibility provided to charter schools under such law.**

#### Strengths:

The applicant effectively documents the degree of flexibility afforded by the State's charter school law on page e28. Under Minnesota State Statute (124E.03, subd. 1), a "charter school is exempt from all statutes and rules applicable to a school, school board, or school district unless a statute or rule is made specifically applicable to a charter school." Extensive flexibility areas are listed on page e28, and include fiscal, legal, financial, personnel, and contractual areas. The State entity maximizes this flexibility by allowing charter schools to seek waivers for employment of non- licensed teachers and in not requiring an administrator's license for charter school leadership, which allows for employing leaders from outside traditional K-12 education. State law also allows school district teachers who wish to teach in a charter school to be granted a leave of up to five years by the district without being penalized in terms of reinstatement, seniority, or other employment benefits. (page e28)

#### Weaknesses:

The applicant does not share how the State entity will work to maximize the flexibility already provided. The applicant does not go into sufficient detail regarding waiver and exemption processes. The applicant does not document the number of charter schools currently taking advantage of these waivers and exemptions nor how they would monitor to determine how charter schools are taking advantage of current flexibilities.

Reader's Score: 9

### Selection Criteria - Objectives

1. **The ambitiousness of the State entity's objectives for the quality charter school program carried out under this program.**

#### Strengths:

The applicant clearly articulates four objectives that focus on quality as well as quantity of new charter schools. The objectives demonstrate ambitious goals that reflect a focus on at-risk students and increasing the quality of both authorizer competencies and charter school sustainability efforts that are related to effective charter school leadership. The objective narrative provides recognition that meaningful dialog and consensus-building with key stakeholders will be critical to success (page e32).

#### Weaknesses:

The applicant does not adequately demonstrate how the role of authorizer is specifically aligned with an increase in Minnesota charter school quality.

Reader's Score: 14

### Selection Criteria - Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants

1. **The likelihood that the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the program will meet those objectives and improve educational results for students.**

#### **Strengths:**

The likelihood that eligible applicants receiving sub-grants under the program will meet objectives is enhanced as there are separate applications for startup and significant expansion/replication projects. Only schools that meet the state's definition of high quality are eligible to apply for expansion/replication grants and an "existing school background section" is included in the application which looks at the existing school's organizational and financial stability and capacity to effectively achieve the proposed growth. Sub-grant applicants for both startup and expansion/replication programs are required to detail Educational Program, Accountability Goals, State Education Priorities, Governance and Management, Parent and Community Engagement, and Marketing and Outreach. A pre-award risk assessment provides financial information that addresses the capacity of the grantee to successfully execute a three year award. (pages e33-e34)

#### **Weaknesses:**

The likelihood that eligible applicants who end up receiving sub-grants under the program will improve educational results for students is diminished as there is no mention of the requirement of providing a baseline for student achievement prior to initiating the educational program. The supporting evidence provided (that a little less than half of sub-grant applications were awarded since 2012) does not necessarily show evidence that the applicants receiving sub-grants under the program will improve education results for students. (page e36)

Reader's Score: 13

### Selection Criteria - State Plan

1. **The State entity's plan to--**

- 1) **Adequately monitor the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program;**
- 2) **Work with the authorized public chartering agencies involved to avoid duplication of work for the charter schools and authorized public chartering agencies; and**
- 3) **Provide technical assistance and support for--**
  - i. **The eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program; and**
  - ii. **Quality authorizing efforts in the State.**

#### **Strengths:**

The applicant adequately specifies how the State monitors eligible applicants receiving sub-grants. There is an on-site program monitoring visit during the first implementation phase of a sub-grant. Also, there is both a mid-award risk assessment (when grantees move from the planning to implementation period to identify any concerns with grant administration) and a fiscal monitoring visit occurs at least once before final payment is made on all grants over \$50,000 and at least annually on grants over \$250,000 (page e37). Extensive plans are provided for technical assistance supporting both eligible applicants receiving sub-grants and supporting quality authorizing efforts in the State. For

example, the applicant mentions a monthly web-based Boot Camp which provides training for sub-grantees on timely and relevant topics, and which uses a cohort-based model (page e40). Additionally, MDE has successfully implemented Minnesota Authorizer Performance Evaluation System (MAPES) and plans to work with authorizers through corrective action and in developing a new five year Approved Authorizer Plan (page e40). The application provides sufficient evidence of plans to work with authorizers to avoid duplication of work for charter schools and authorizers inasmuch as MDE plans to engage authorizers in a continuous improvement review of the Authorizer Annual Report to significantly reduce or eliminate duplication (page e38).

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not state consequences as a result of non-compliance. Efficacy evidence related to current technical assistance and support activities is not specifically provided for either eligible sub-grant applicants or charter authorizers.

**Reader's Score: 19**

**Selection Criteria - Parent and Community Involvement**

**1. The State entity's plan to solicit and consider input from parents and other members of the community on the implementation and operation of charter schools in the State.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant adequately provides evidence that parent and community involvement is both solicited and input considered at the charter school level. There is a State legal mandate that one parent and one community member must hold memberships on charter school boards. There is also a MDE Family Engagement Committee which serves as a statewide conduit for training and support. MDE maintains a Family Engagement website featuring information and best practices that can assist charter schools in adopting a family engagement focus. This includes web-based training modules (page e41). The CSP sub-grant process includes the requirement of describing a clear vision and effective strategy for meaningful parent and community engagement that will further the charter school's mission (page e42).

**Weaknesses:**

Although parent and community involvement was considered related to ESSA planning, there is no mention of a mechanism for soliciting and considering input related to the State implementation and operation of charter schools (page e41).

**Reader's Score: 7**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design**

**1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the State entity's charter school subgrant program, including the extent to which the project design furthers the State entity's overall strategy for increasing the number of high-quality charter schools in the State and improving student academic achievement. In determining the quality of the project design, the Secretary considers the quality of the State entity's process for awarding subgrants for planning, program design, and initial implementation including--**

**1) The subgrant application and peer review process, timelines for these processes, and how the State entity intends to ensure that subgrants will be awarded to eligible applicants demonstrating the capacity to create high-**

charter schools; and

2) A reasonable year-by-year estimate, with supporting evidence, of (i) the number of subgrants the State entity expects to award during the project period and the average size of those subgrants, including an explanation of any assumptions upon which the estimates are based; and (ii) if the State entity has previously received a CSP grant, the percentage of eligible applicants that were awarded subgrants and how this percentage related to the overall quality of the applicant pool.

#### **Strengths:**

The project design is clear and aligned with the State plan and objectives. Reasonable and appropriate processes are described for awarding sub-grants which further the overall strategy for increasing the number of high-quality charter schools in the State. The MDE plan to conduct three sub-grant competitions each year with two start-ups and one significant expansion/replication is feasible. Application periods and timelines are appropriate (a twelve week timeline from announcing the competition and publishing application documents to the awarding of grants). Fall and spring application periods for new charter school startups will allow multiple opportunities to apply; with the spring application period including significant expansion/replications applications (which will leverage the timing of the release of the data-driven high-quality charter school list and statutory site expansion affidavit deadline), page e42. The applicant has provided a well-developed peer review process for sub-grant applications. Reviewers are recruited from Minnesota's charter school and broader education communities and they conduct both independent reviews as well as participate in an in-person panel session to finalize scores and comments (page e43). The applicant provides a reasonable year-by-year estimate of the number of sub-grants they expect to award during the project period (10-12 sub-grants annually, for a total of 55 new awards during the five-year grant period), as well as the average size of those sub-grants (\$600,000; ranging from \$550,000 to \$650,000). Reasonable estimates are based on previously received CSP grants (page e44).

#### **Weaknesses:**

The applicant mentions that half of those applying for the 2012 CSP grant were funded. However, there is no evidence of discussion as to how this percentage relates to the overall quality of the applicant pool.

**Reader's Score:** 13

#### **Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan, Theory of Action**

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and the project's theory of action. In determining the quality of the management plan and the project's theory of action, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- 1) The quality, including the cohesiveness and strength of reasoning, of the "logic model" (as defined in this notice), and the extent to which it addresses the role of the grant in promoting the State-level strategy for using charter schools to improve educational outcomes for students through CSP subgrants for planning, program design, and initial implementation and other strategies;
- 2) The extent to which the State entity's project-specific performance measures, including any measures required by the Department, support the logic model; and
- 3) The adequacy of the management plan to--
  - i. Achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including the existence of clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks; and
  - ii. Address any compliance issues or findings related to the CSP that are identified in an audit or other monitoring review.

#### **Strengths:**

The project-specific performance measures support the logic model quite clearly. The four objectives are stated with corresponding and appropriate performance measures (page e48). The management plan is well developed, including "baselines, milestones, and outcomes;" "budget line;" "completed by;" and "completed when." This is organized by the four objectives and is clear, specific, and aligned across all corresponding areas (page e49-e57). The applicant notes that Minnesota's 2012 CSP award was monitored by WestEd in 2015 and revealed two findings (insufficient guidance about lottery practices and unallowable expenses in sub-grant budgets). Grant application instructions have been updated to include non-regulatory guidance about lottery and student enrollment, and MDE now requires applicants to provide

documentation of their enrollment and lottery policies and provides technical assistance to ensure compliance with state and federal laws. MDE has also updated budget instructions to address findings on unallowable expenses. Performance measures are aligned to achieve goals within the budget constraints and are reasonable and achievable (page e57).

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant includes a logic model, but does not address the role of the grant in promoting the State-level strategy for using charter schools to improve educational outcomes for students. There is a focus on charter school leadership and management, as well as on enhancing quality charter authorizers; but not a focus on the specific connections these have for improving the percentage of students demonstrating academic proficiency. The plan lacks a process for identifying and remediating future potential compliance issues.

**Reader's Score:** 12

**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Periodic Review and Evaluation**

- 1. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that the State provides for periodic review and evaluation by the authorized public chartering agency of each charter school at least once every five years, unless required more frequently by State law, and takes steps to ensure that such reviews take place. The review and evaluation must serve to determine whether the charter school is meeting the terms of the school's charter and meeting or exceeding the student academic achievement requirements and goals for charter schools as set forth in the school's charter or under State law, a State regulation, or a State policy, provided that the student academic achievement requirements and goals for charter schools established by that policy meet or exceed those set forth under applicable State law or State regulation. This periodic review and evaluation must include an opportunity for the authorized public chartering agency to take appropriate action or impose meaningful consequences on the charter school, if necessary.**

**Strengths:**

No strengths noted.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not provide adequate detail regarding Minnesota State statute as it concerns charter schools periodic review and evaluation by authorized public chartering agencies. Specific information on how the State required review and evaluation determines whether the charter school is meeting charter terms is missing. Although the applicant appropriately relates the Minnesota State statute language which reads, "The primary criteria for determining a contract renewal is the success of a school in increasing student achievement and meeting the goals of the charter school agreement" (Minn. Stat. 124E.10, subd. 1 (a)(13-14); page e20), the applicant does not demonstrate how the State ensures that periodic review and evaluation by the authorized public chartering agency of each charter school takes place at least once every five years. Although the authorized public chartering agency non-renewal of a charter school contract and school closure is mentioned, the application lacks language related to taking appropriate action or imposing meaningful consequences based on periodic review and evaluation. (page e20)

**Reader's Score:** 0

**Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Charter School Oversight**

- 1. To meet this priority, an application must demonstrate that State law, regulations, or other policies in the State where the applicant is located require the following:**



**a) That each charter school in the State--**

- 1. Operates under a legally binding charter or performance contract between itself and the school's authorized public chartering agency that describes the rights and responsibilities of the school and the authorized public chartering agency;**
- 2. Conducts annual, timely, and independent audits of the school's financial statements that are filed with the school's authorized public chartering agency; and**
- 3. Demonstrates improved student academic achievement; and**

**b) That all authorized public chartering agencies in the State use increases in student academic achievement for all groups of students described in section 1111(c)(2) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 6311(c)(2)) as one of the most important factors when determining whether to renew or revoke a school's charter.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant clearly specifies that there must be a legally binding contract between a charter school and the school's authorized public chartering agency under Minnesota State statute. The legally binding contract must include "the rights and responsibilities of the charter school and the authorizer and must include 'criteria, processes, and procedures the authorizer will use to monitor and evaluate the fiscal, operational, and academic performance' of the charter school (Minn. Stat. 124E.10, subd. 1 (a)(7); page e21)." In addition, Minnesota Statute 124E.16, subd. 1 is referenced which requires charter schools to submit an independent audit report to the commissioner and its authorizer annually by December 31. This audit report due date provides the opportunity for correction mid-year. The citation, Minn. Stat. 124E.10, subd. 1 (13) (a), references the improvement of all pupil learning and all student achievement and "is the most important factor in determining whether to renew the contract" (page e21).

**Weaknesses:**

There are no weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process**

**1. To meet this priority, the applicant must demonstrate that the State--**

- a) Provides for one authorized public chartering agency that is not an LEA, such as a State chartering board, for each individual or entity seeking to operate a charter school pursuant to State law; or**
- b) In the case of a State in which LEAs are the only authorized public chartering agencies, allows for an appeals process for the denial of an application for a charter school.**

**Note: In order to meet this priority under paragraph (b) above, the entity hearing appeal must have the authority to approve the charter application over the objections of the LEA.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant successfully documents the types of authorizers allowed by Minnesota's charter school law (Minn. Stat 124E.05, subd. 1(4)). There is a variety of allowable authorizers, including the following: a school board or education district; charitable organization under 501C(3); private college; state college or university; non-profit corporation subject to chapter 317A; and a single-purpose authorizer formed as a charitable, and nonsectarian organization (page e22).

**Weaknesses:**

There are no weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 2**

#### Competitive Preference Priority 4 - Equitable Financing

1. 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 convincing evidence that the State ensures charter schools are provided with equitable financing when compared with traditional public schools. Minnesota charter schools are considered Local Education Agencies, and are fiscally independent and operate autonomously of school districts. Under Minnesota statutes 124E.20 to 124E.26, charter schools are eligible to receive general education revenue, referendum revenue, extended time revenue, special education aid, building lease aid, long-term facilities maintenance revenue, startup grants and other revenue traditional school districts receive. Charter schools receive direct payment of state and federal aids that flow through MDE (page e22).

##### Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 2

#### Competitive Preference Priority 5 - Charter School Facilities

1. 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 clearly provides evidence of providing unique opportunities for charter school facilities. On page e24 Minnesota statute is cited, allowing charter schools to lease buildings and apply to receive building lease aid (Minn. Stat. 124E.13). In addition, charter schools may organize affiliated nonprofit building corporations (ABCs) "to purchase, expand, or renovate an existing facility to serve as a school or may construct a new school facility (Minn. Stat. 124E.13, subd.3)."

##### Weaknesses:

The applicant does not adequately describe maximizing flexibility. For example, only charter schools in existence for six years may apply for affiliated nonprofit building corporations. Less than 25% of charter schools across the state have currently taken advantage of this opportunity.

Reader's Score: 1

#### Competitive Preference Priority 6 - Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools/LEAs

- 1. 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**

**Strengths:**

The applicant adequately documents various ways that MDE and their statewide partners reward and celebrate the successful use of best practices from charter schools as well as provide opportunities for both charter schools and district counterparts to access these best practices (page e24). MDE awards Charter School Program best practice grants and these recipients showcase unique local practices in short videos. Charter schools are designated as Blue Ribbon, Reward, and/or Celebration schools, and the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (MACS) provides annual Innovation Awards for increasing learning opportunities for all pupils. Per the application, these opportunities encourage the use of different innovative teaching methods, measure learning outcomes, create different innovative forms of measuring outcomes, establish new forms of accountability for schools, and create professional development opportunities for teachers (page e24).

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not demonstrate the extent to which the State is currently using best practices from charter schools to provide targeted assistance to improve struggling schools. Using school awards recognizing best practices in some schools does not translate to improving struggling schools and local educational agencies. The applicant recognizes this as an area to strengthen by stating, "to identify creative ways to leverage the Innovation Awards to help struggling schools." (page e25)

**Reader's Score: 1**

**Competitive Preference Priority 7 - Serving At-Risk Students**

- 1. 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 sufficiently provides ways that charter schools serve at-risk students (page e25). A research validated data-driven tool developed by MDE, the Minnesota Early Indicator and Response System (MEIRS), is offered to charter schools to use as a screening tool for students in grades 6-9 to identify students who are at risk of not completing high school in four years. This tool can assist in identifying appropriate support and intervention for targeted students.

**Weaknesses:**

On page e25 the applicant states by law, students attending charter schools in traditional districts that have a State Approved Alternative Learning Program must be served by that program, unless the charter school also serves as a State Approved Alternative Learning Program (page e25 and e26). This limits the flexibility of charter schools to provide their own programs for at-risk students. The applicant provides no evidence that the MDE's divisions of school support, special education and alternative programs work closely with the Charter Center to assure that needs of at-risk students are met.

**Reader's Score: 1**

## Competitive Preference Priority 8 - Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing

1. 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 documents evidence of steps to ensure that all authorized public chartering agencies implement best practices for charter school authorizing (pages e26-e28). The state collaborated with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) on revising model law and established an authorizer review process, partially based on NACSA's Principles and Standards. The State has created and implemented a comprehensive authorizer application and review system (Minnesota Statutes, 124E.05, subd. 3). Formative evaluative data is returned to each applicant after a review as a way to continuously improve authorizing practices. The Minnesota Authorizer Performance Evaluation System (MAPES) reviews authorizers' performance as required by statute (Minn. Stat., sect. 124E.10, subd. 5) and identifies high-quality authorizer practices.

### Weaknesses:

The applicant does not describe an ongoing process ensuring best practices with sufficient detail. The applicant describes planning for providing best practices, but these mechanisms are not described as being yet established. Specific interventions and supports are not cited.

**Reader's Score:** 3

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**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 06/22/2017 03:35 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/22/2017 08:49 AM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Minnesota Department of Education (U282A170007)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection criteria</b>		
<b>Flexibility</b>		
1. Flexibility	10	9
<b>Sub Total</b>	10	9
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Objectives</b>		
1. Objectives	15	10
<b>Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants</b>		
1. Quality of Subgrant	15	10
<b>State Plan</b>		
1. State Plan	20	18
<b>Parent and Community Involvement</b>		
1. Involvement	10	9
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	15	12
<b>Quality of the Management Plan, Theory of Action</b>		
1. Management Plan	15	11
<b>Sub Total</b>	90	70
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
<b>Periodic Review and Evaluation</b>		
1. Review and Evaluation	5	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	5	0
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
<b>Charter School Oversight</b>		
1. Charter School Oversight	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	5	5
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 3</b>		
<b>Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process</b>		
1. Authorizer other than LEA	2	2
<b>Sub Total</b>	2	2

**Competitive Preference Priority 4**

**Equitable Financing**

1. Equitable Financing	2	2
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority 5**

**Charter School Facilities**

1. Charter School Facilities	2	1
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority 6**

**Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools/LEAs**

1. Struggling Schools	2	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority 7**

**Serving At-Risk Students**

1. Serving At-Risk Students	2	1
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority 8**

**Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing**

1. Best Practices	5	3
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>

<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>93</b>
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# Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - Panel 7 - Minnesota - 1: 84.282A

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

Applicant: Minnesota Department of Education (U282A170007)

## Questions

### Selection criteria - Flexibility

1. **The degree of flexibility afforded by the State's charter school law and how the State entity will work to maximize the flexibility provided to charter schools under such law.**

#### Strengths:

The application reviews the flexibilities afforded to charter schools, including exemption from all statutes and rules applicable to a school or school board unless specification is made in law towards charter schools. Some additional examples of specific flexibilities provided that reinforce satisfaction of the criteria have included the ability to function as an LEA, fiscal and legal autonomy to procure and expend funds locally, ability to establish their own board governance structures and protocols, and the right to directly receive funds (pg. e28).

Administrator licensing is not required for individuals to perform some of those duties in a charter school, which allows charter schools to employ personnel outside of the traditional K-12 environment (pg. e29). Teachers wishing to work in charter schools are granted a leave for up to five years without penalty to opportunities for reinstatement, seniority, or other employment benefits. These demonstrated flexibilities allow charter schools the opportunity to more easily recruit, employ, and retain personnel that align to specific modeling, missions, and objectives of the school.

The State of Minnesota specifically grants the authority to manage operations of a charter school to the local board. This not only reinforces the autonomy of the school from state laws, but also emphasizes the distinct roles of the authorizers in oversight and the responsibilities of service providers or operators as vendors of the local board.

The Applicant demonstrates a strong understanding of the crucial role the governing board plays in the success and direction of the school (pg. e29), outlining its plan to allocate grant resources towards identifying and delivering on supports for charter school boards and administrators.

#### Weaknesses:

No specific information is provided to describe the waiver or exemption process. Evidence is not provided to demonstrate how many charter schools take advantage of these described flexibilities, nor is the process provided to ensure the State's role in approving, monitoring, or periodically reviewing the compliance or success of these granted waivers.

The application simultaneously touts exemption from administrator requirements while asserting that pursuit of charter school leader credentials will be sought through receipt of the grant. A summary of how credentialing for charter school leaders (pg. e30) will ensure the preservation of the autonomy afforded to charter schools currently in this area was not provided.

Specific strategies and plans for maximizing or expanding upon existing flexibilities in the future was not described in the application as the criterion requires.

## Selection Criteria - Objectives

### 1. The ambitiousness of the State entity's objectives for the quality charter school program carried out under this program.

#### Strengths:

The application outlines the problems to date that it is attempting to address with the stated objectives (pg. e31), openly stating identified issues in the areas of fiscal management, governance, school safety, and special education. This is not only forthcoming and transparent, but also establishes a framework and baseline for which the Applicant has built upon.

As a local control state, Minnesota recognizes its role in needing to facilitate and/or collaborate on the activities of authorizers and charter schools, rather than attempting to assert direct provision or mandate. The Applicant also recognizes the challenges and time required to create the environment and relationships that are necessary for successfully doing this.

The objectives were selected in collaboration with charter stakeholders statewide (pg. e32), rather than developed in a top-down manner. This should serve to promote sector buy-in and foster increased trust and relationships between the state and the sector.

#### Weaknesses:

The rationale for increasing the number of charter schools and authorizers is built solely upon cited growth figures to date (pg. e31), rather than an interplay between growth to date and performance statewide. There is nothing to assert that further growth will have a direct impact on statewide performance or service objectives.

While history, rationale, and collaboration is evident in the establishment of the objectives (pg. e32), specific details were not included in the objectives language to ascertain the rigor and feasibility of the selected objectives.

Objective 1 establishes the desire to increase the number of high-quality charter schools that serve disadvantaged students (pg. e32). It is unclear whether this implies 1) expansion of currently identified high-quality schools to include more seats specifically for disadvantaged students; 2) movement of low performing charter schools that serve high proportions of disadvantaged students to high-quality status, or; 3) the establishment of additional new charter schools that focus on service to disadvantaged student groups—or even any combination of these objectives. This distinction would yield variance in allocated resources, strategies, baseline information utilized, and targets established.

The goals of Minnesota's World's Best Workforce (WBWF) legislation was referenced in Objective 2 (pg. e32), but these goals were not cited in detail within the application, making it unclear explicitly what the objective of the Applicant is. Reference to the initiative (pg. e34) only summarizes the overarching objectives of WBWF, not its strategies or targets that would allow for a more in-depth understanding of the corresponding grant objective. The application also states that 'WBWF plans identify areas for growth and attention' with regard to readiness and achievement gaps within this construct. Without detail as to what these areas of need are, an understanding of the objective, as well as an assessment of its ambitiousness and rigor cannot be made.

Although the Applicant acknowledges (and touts its acknowledgement of) the distinct role of the authorizer in oversight versus operation, Objective 3 still assigns a direct impact to charter school performance through their training and evaluation of authorizers. This direct impact desired (increase charter quality) is not explicitly aligned to the indirect method (e.g. train authorizers on closure, approval of new schools, reporting, etc.).



The content validity of Objective 4 is low, as the term sustainability is not explicitly defined in the Objective or supplemental narrative of the application. Similar to Objective 3, the connection between the indirect method (educational work with leaders and authorizers) and the desired impact (long-term sustainability) isn't entirely clear.

**Reader's Score: 10**

### **Selection Criteria - Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants**

#### **1. The likelihood that the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the program will meet those objectives and improve educational results for students.**

##### **Strengths:**

The Applicant recognizes the distinction between the criteria necessary to ensure the successful start-up of a new charter school and those that ensure the successful expansion or replication of a charter school (pg. e33). With grant objectives that align to the latter, this understanding and corresponding adjustments to materials and processes that align to this distinction, will yield a more reliable review process.

Eligibility for expansion and replication is contained to schools categorized as high quality to date. The appendices (pg. e211) provide a list of eligible applicants in the state.

The expansion and replication components also include a section for review of operational and financial performance (pg. e35), which are crucial indicators of likely success in charter school expansion and replication.

The scoring introduces the utilization of points specifically awarded to sub-grant applicants that address the State's priorities (pg. e34). This bonus point approach ensures prioritization of the identified priorities.

The State is refining their list of allowable expenses (pg. e35). Although possibly seen as both a strength and weakness, this approach will better enable the State to track and monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the utilization of CSP funds.

##### **Weaknesses:**

The process does not seem to differentiate between charter school expansion and replication in its subgrant design.

Assuming comparability to the application provided in the appendix (pg. e211), eligibility to be a high-quality school would be contained to 25 schools that serve a minimum of 200 students (pg. e35). The rationale for this enrollment qualifier was not included, nor were figures provided as to how many charter schools were excluded from this applicant pool.

It is further unclear whether the eligible expansion and replication applicants will be able to reach some of the geographic areas within the state where need is the highest, or whether any have models that are proven to be successful with those target populations. In fact, performance figures that would validate the academic need and the ability of identified charter schools to positively affect this academic need statewide is not included in the application.

Historical subgrant performance is referenced only in the number of applications received, the number of applicants awarded, and a general reference that 'several grantees were successful in second or third applications' (pg. e36). Actual

performance figures and or supplemental evidence were not provided as a way to demonstrate the effectiveness of past programming endeavors in way that would lend support to the current proposal.

**Reader's Score: 10**

## **Selection Criteria - State Plan**

### **1. The State entity's plan to--**

- 1) Adequately monitor the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program;**
- 2) Work with the authorized public chartering agencies involved to avoid duplication of work for the charter schools and authorized public chartering agencies; and**
- 3) Provide technical assistance and support for--**
  - i. The eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program; and**
  - ii. Quality authorizing efforts in the State.**

#### **Strengths:**

The monitoring process involves a mid-cycle risk assessment, which benefits both the awardee and the State in analyzing the ability to proceed between planning and implementation periods of a grant (pg. e36). This is especially critical for new applicants that would not yet have a track record of success.

The State offers technical assistance both through in-person formatting and virtual training opportunities (pg. e37). Specific content areas were outlined in the application that correspond to the priorities and objectives of the grant application, ranging from using data to developing goals to charter school management.

Monitoring activities also include on-site components that serve to ensure activities are in line with the application and that practices are in compliance with state and federal requirements and the state has a distinct process for fiscal monitoring that tiers activities by the grant amount.

In order to reduce duplication of efforts by various stakeholders, the MDE conducted a cross-walk of all district and charter school reporting requirements in order to highlight areas where consolidation or removal could occur (pg. e38). Additionally, the MDE has aligned annual report requirements to be combined with WBWF reporting, which reduces duplication in content and generation of reporting for charter schools. Statute in the state also emphasizes the use of Department data to continually minimize required reporting where applicable.

The Department hosts an annual training for authorizers, where low scores on the MAPES system are utilized to generate content, as well as feedback generated from authorizers. Upcoming topics were referenced in the application (pg. e38-39).

Through this award, each authorizer will be awarded up to \$1,500 to attend non-MDE training and professional development (pg. e41). This is a positive step that reinforces the MDE's understanding that their ability to provide training and technical assistance to authorizers is limited, as they are not themselves practitioners or staffed with expertise in all areas of practice (even all of those outlined in the MAPES rubric).

#### **Weaknesses:**

While monitoring activities are described, information around the outcome of those activities was not included in the narrative (pg. e36-37). For example, it is unclear what happens when a school is found to be non-compliant. It is also

unclear whether MDE activity to date with other grant cycles could have been included to substantiate the success or breadth of MDE training and monitoring activities.

Although the application indicates that its team attends monthly meetings with the charter advocacy body of the State, and regularly provides technical training and assistance to charter schools and authorizers (pg. e38), the nature or level of the State's work (and success) in this area was not detailed. For example, it is referenced that a Compliance liaison works with a Department Center staff member on statutory requirements and contracts, but it is unclear whether this effort is due to a lack of compliance or strong contracting to date, as well as what the rate of authorizer performance in these areas have been since this feedback loop was generated.

As the rubric calls for support for quality authorizing efforts throughout the State, the application did not include reference or description of ongoing authorizing activities independent of its particular role, making it unclear whether quality authorizing is an initiative only being pursued by the MDE, and if not, what the depth, breadth and responsiveness looks like statewide.

**Reader's Score: 18**

### **Selection Criteria - Parent and Community Involvement**

#### **1. The State entity's plan to solicit and consider input from parents and other members of the community on the implementation and operation of charter schools in the State.**

##### **Strengths:**

An example of the State's commitment to parent and family engagement referenced more than 300 local meetings held by the Commissioner to solicit input from families directly around development of their ESSA plan, including sessions for families who speak languages other than English (pg. e41). Although this did not include a direct link to family involvement in the implementation and operation of charter schools in the State, it does speak to the ability and desire of the MDE to engage directly with families in large-scale, statewide initiatives, suggesting they have the capacity and interest to do the same under these grant objectives.

The MDE also seats an agency-wide Family Engagement Committee that serves as a conduit for training and support, and maintains a Family Engagement website that is specific to practices that can assist charter schools with establishing or improving family and community engagement (pg. e41).

Minnesota law requires that charter school boards include at least one parent or legal guardian of a student enrolled in the school who is not an employee of the school, and at least one interested community member who resides in Minnesota and is not employed by the school or has a child enrolled in the school (pg. e41). These parameters allow for explicit inclusion of both parents and community members in a way that provides true, objective input and involvement that is distinct from staff and other affiliates of the school.

New school application materials and annual reporting requirements include sections for schools to describe their plans to engage and involvement with families and the community (pg. e42). All must establish an advisory committee as well that ensures active participation of the community; this provision also requires, to the extent possible, that the advisory group reflect the diversity of the community, which serves to increase the cultural competency of the local board.

##### **Weaknesses:**

The outcomes or implications of having strong or weak parent and community engagement or involvement was not described in the application. It is unclear whether charter schools successful in this area are rewarded or highlighted in

any particular way, nor was it mentioned what occurs when a charter school is inactive or non-compliant along these plan requirements or engagement activities. Essentially, the plan to solicit and consider input is strong (even considering the indirect means), but the role of the State in ensuring its collection or success was not described.

**Reader's Score: 9**

### **Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design**

**1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the State entity's charter school subgrant program, including the extent to which the project design furthers the State entity's overall strategy for increasing the number of high-quality charter schools in the State and improving student academic achievement. In determining the quality of the project design, the Secretary considers the quality of the State entity's process for awarding subgrants for planning, program design, and initial implementation including--**

**1) The subgrant application and peer review process, timelines for these processes, and how the State entity intends to ensure that subgrants will be awarded to eligible applicants demonstrating the capacity to create high-quality charter schools; and**

**2) A reasonable year-by-year estimate, with supporting evidence, of (i) the number of subgrants the State entity expects to award during the project period and the average size of those subgrants, including an explanation of any assumptions upon which the estimates are based; and (ii) if the State entity has previously received a CSP grant, the percentage of eligible applicants that were awarded subgrants and how this percentage related to the overall quality of the applicant pool.**

#### **Strengths:**

The Applicant is proposing to offer both fall and spring sub-grant application cycles. This results from knowing that approximately half of the new applicants are denied in initial attempts. This gives multiple opportunities to ensure readiness by applicants to be strong fiscal stewards of public dollars. It also increases exposure to required MDE trainings and conversations that can have a direct impact on that capacity and readiness to implement sub-grant activities (pg. e42).

Training activities for peer reviewers of sub-grants includes information around conflicts of interest, bias in evaluation, and rubric review. Training around these technical elements (beyond simple process overview) increases the likelihood of objective reviews and strong inter-rater reliability. Additionally, review occurs independently, but reviewers have an in-person consensus meeting to finalize scores. This allows for review of potentially missed or misinterpreted information, as well as weighting of individual peer reviewer expertise (e.g. someone with an expertise in finance is going to have a more intricate and robust perspective on the budget proposal than the curriculum expert).

Even after the awardees have been identified, a pre-award risk assessment is completed to garner additional information on the capacity of the awardee. From this, additional requirements or supports are identified (pg. e43).

Implementation of the awards will be split into two periods and awarded based on enrollment. This corresponds to the fiscal monitoring and health that the MDE is seeking to ensure in its process and oversight activities.

The definition and method for determining a high quality charter school (HQCS) sought feedback from several stakeholders, including charter school leaders, authorizers, and the statewide association (pg. e46).

#### **Weaknesses:**

One of the assumptions that drove the anticipated number of awards expected was 'stated interest from the field in replicating a school under a single charter' (pg. e44). Details around the volume and level of interest were not provided to validate this assumption.

Another assumption for the number of awards anticipated references the 'number of brand new schools that have been approved by MDE that have not yet received a startup grant' (pg. e44). This specific number has not been provided, nor

has alignment to school quality expectations been established to ensure this pool of charters that hasn't received awards yet would make viable applicants for this grant cycle.

Authorizer projections over a 5-year period are not necessarily a solid assumption to make, unless data have also been analyzed to compare authorizer projections to actual approvals in historical years. Further, with the addition of four new authorizers, it is unclear how projections for these authorizers were established and whether they are likely to be accurate as well.

It is unclear how a mindfulness of charter oversaturation in particular areas directly corresponds to reduction of the sub-grant award amounts (pg. e45). Additional detail was not provided beyond this statement.

It is stated that 28% of enrolled charter students are at schools that receive CSP grants (pg. e45). The connection between this percentage and its relation to the overall quality of the applicant pool was not described. This also means that to date, CSP funds are not reaching nearly  $\frac{3}{4}$  of charter school students in the state, further reducing the ability to make a direct connection between historical funding and growth or quality objectives.

It was found that students identifying as minority, students eligible for free and reduced-priced meals, and English Learners who attend CSP awardee schools tend to do better than students in district schools (pg. e45). It was not specified whether these schools serve these student groups in proportions that are relative to the sector (which are much higher than state figures), or whether these schools perform better than their own area district schools, or simply better than a statewide aggregate of district schools. These potential disparities have significant implications on the true successes or impact of CSP funding to date.

Utilizing z-scoring greater than or equal to zero to determine quality, as the application indicates is done for its academic evaluation, does not necessarily consider standard error in measurement or distribution around/away from the true mean (pg. e46). Considering this review spans 12 academic measures that utilize this approach, information around academic quality could be lost or misinterpreted with this lone approach.

**Reader's Score:** 12

### **Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan, Theory of Action**

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and the project's theory of action. In determining the quality of the management plan and the project's theory of action, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

- 1) The quality, including the cohesiveness and strength of reasoning, of the "logic model" (as defined in this notice), and the extent to which it addresses the role of the grant in promoting the State-level strategy for using charter schools to improve educational outcomes for students through CSP subgrants for planning, program design, and initial implementation and other strategies;**
- 2) The extent to which the State entity's project-specific performance measures, including any measures required by the Department, support the logic model; and**
- 3) The adequacy of the management plan to--**
  - i. Achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including the existence of clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks; and**
  - ii. Address any compliance issues or findings related to the CSP that are identified in an audit or other monitoring review.**

#### **Strengths:**

Formative and summative assessment data will be utilized to evaluate the success of the plan (pg. e49). This will include a combination of internal staff to drive data analytics, as well as a competitive request for proposals process to have a qualified and external evaluator carry out the evaluation in years 2-5.

Staffing, personnel and resources that include timing and methods are outlined in the logic model of each objective (pg. e50-e54). A year-by-year estimate is also provided that sufficiently corresponds to these other inputs.

The application is forthcoming in its historical review by WestEd, as well as the findings that emerged from this review related to lottery processes and allowable expenses (pg. e57). The Applicant made changes to address these findings in the current proposal. These specific changes correspond to revisions in the budget that support the adequacy of the management plan. In fact, overall, the management plan is specifically connected to the provided budget in a way that corresponds to the objectives outlined in the application.

#### **Weaknesses:**

Not all of the outcomes are explicitly measurable. Objectives that utilize language such as more schools, more satisfactory authorizers, and high engagement without quantification do not give an indication of baseline data and whether change over time is expected to be significant.

Within Objective 1, stating a long-term growth goal of 3% translates only to roughly 1625 additional students in charter schools. This increases the statewide market share of charters by less than .02%. It is unclear whether this is the actual intended outcome of the grant. Additionally, specifying the desire that 50% of sub-grant awardees serve priority student groups doesn't necessarily correspond to the objective that there is an increase in service (quantity and quality) to these student groups (pg. e50-51).

Within Objective 2, it is unclear how the desired outcomes correspond to achievement of the WBWF legislation (pg. e52). Technical assistance, required writing submissions, and a self-report indicator around the ability to write SMART goals do not necessarily translate to achievement of the goals themselves.

Similar to Objective 2, the outcomes for measure 3 do not directly correspond to improved charter performance (pg. e53). It cannot be asserted that completing authorizer evaluations, having 70% of authorizers rated as satisfactory, and 90% of participants self-report increased knowledge will correlate at all to improved student performance (or even quality authorizing practices in the state).

Baseline data for Objective 4 were reported as not available (pg. e54), making it unclear whether the outcomes established will result in a significant improvement in charter sustainability.

Descriptions of the formative systems of measurement being utilized were not included.

Absolute charter sector performance objectives do not necessarily ensure the success of the CSP efforts. Targets would better correspond if they referenced a percentage of awardees that met those performance objectives, or addressed an increase in the number of HQCS, or monitored growth and performance within their awardee pool relative to the sector and state. In theory, charters not receiving grant funds could be responsible for sector growth and performance over the next five years, and it would still look like the CSP grant was successful based on the outcomes listed.

Although the application cites findings that occurred through historical audits and monitoring practices (pg. e57), and goes on to address how those have been resolved, the existing management plan and theory of action do not explicitly describe a process to respond or adapt to any findings that might occur in the current cycle as the evaluation criteria require.

## Priority Questions

### Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Periodic Review and Evaluation

1. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that the State provides for periodic review and evaluation by the authorized public chartering agency of each charter school at least once every five years, unless required more frequently by State law, and takes steps to ensure that such reviews take place. The review and evaluation must serve to determine whether the charter school is meeting the terms of the school's charter and meeting or exceeding the student academic achievement requirements and goals for charter schools as set forth in the school's charter or under State law, a State regulation, or a State policy, provided that the student academic achievement requirements and goals for charter schools established by that policy meet or exceed those set forth under applicable State law or State regulation. This periodic review and evaluation must include an opportunity for the authorized public chartering agency to take appropriate action or impose meaningful consequences on the charter school, if necessary.

#### Strengths:

No strengths noted.

#### Weaknesses:

While Minnesota law requires authorizers to monitor and evaluate the performance of charter schools (pg. e20), evidence was not provided to demonstrate the State's role in ensuring this requirement is fulfilled. The rubric explicitly calls for the State's provision for this periodic review.

Although a performance contract is required and utilized by authorizers, reference to assurances of minimum expectations within those performance contracts (or some form of standardization) was not described. This makes it difficult to determine whether authorizer standards are comparable or rigorous.

Similarly, the legal requirement exists that renewal of charter contracts must occur at least every five years, and primary criteria for decision-making must entail student achievement and meeting the goals of the contract, but again, the role of the State in ensuring any level of compliance or standardization in this process was not detailed.

Reference is made to accountability for authorizers by the MDE with the MAPES system (pg. e21), and copies of the performance measures were included in the appendices. However, information around the implications of an authorizer's score was not provided. It is unclear whether those ratings yield any action by the State, such as intervention, sanction, or even support or incentive.

The weight given to periodic review or evaluation of charter schools by authorizers is not highlighted or specified in the application, making it unclear whether the weighting of these sorts of items is insignificant and diluted relative to the overall list of 20 measures reported on in the MAPES report. Items such as performance standards and authorizer evaluation account for only 20% of the indicator rating when combined, and only 15% of the overall authorizer rating. An authorizer could fail along these measures, and still operate in good standing with the State.

Although the rubric is provided for authorizer evaluation (pg. e145-166), additional information around the roles of the State in implementation is not provided. With a highly subjective system of measurement, necessary steps to mitigate risk in implementation were not described, including: orientation of evaluators who are not familiar with authorizing; strategies to address the conflict of interest in having schools evaluate its authorizer on subjective and non-required measures such as professional development; exclusion of small or new authorizers in many of the rubric's top ratings due to variation in resources and maturation; as well as an emphasis on fixing poor performing schools versus monitoring.

Reader's Score: 0

### Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Charter School Oversight

1. To meet this priority, an application must demonstrate that State law, regulations, or other policies in the State where the applicant is located require the following:

a) That each charter school in the State--

1. Operates under a legally binding charter or performance contract between itself and the school's authorized public chartering agency that describes the rights and responsibilities of the school and the authorized public chartering agency;
2. Conducts annual, timely, and independent audits of the school's financial statements that are filed with the school's authorized public chartering agency; and
3. Demonstrates improved student academic achievement; and

b) That all authorized public chartering agencies in the State use increases in student academic achievement for all groups of students described in section 1111(c)(2) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 6311(c)(2)) as one of the most important factors when determining whether to renew or revoke a school's charter.

#### Strengths:

State statute explicitly requires the utilization of a charter contract for all charter schools operating in the state that must outline the rights and responsibilities of both the school and the authorizer, as well as criteria processes, and procedures the authorizer will use to monitor and evaluate the fiscal, operational and academic performance of the school throughout the term (pg. e21).

Legal obligations described under charter renewal requirements (pg. e21) satisfy the third criterion that each charter school in the State must demonstrate improved student achievement.

#### Weaknesses:

Although the application has satisfied the criteria, the application describes that the Commissioner does not have any requirements governing state standards and performance benchmarks. Therefore, charter schools are bound to the performance expectations outlined in their charter contracts. While this reinforces local control and the principles of the charter bargain, it does not ensure a minimum level of expected performance that must be attained by all schools in the State, meaning that variation by authorizer could yield persistent or chronic low performance.

Similarly, the magnitude of improvement required for all students in charter schools as part of renewal decision-making was not specified. Although this is not often specified in statute, regulation and other policies in the State were not referenced to ensure that improvement is present, absolute, and/or significant. Theoretically, a .00001% increase in student achievement (and one that could be the effect of sample size or standard error) would satisfy the legal requirement renewal, but not reflect true improvement for a school or students.

Reader's Score: 5

### Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process

1. To meet this priority, the applicant must demonstrate that the State--

- a) Provides for one authorized public chartering agency that is not an LEA, such as a State chartering board, for each individual or entity seeking to operate a charter school pursuant to State law; or
- b) In the case of a State in which LEAs are the only authorized public chartering agencies, allows for an appeals process for the denial of an application for a charter school.



**Note: In order to meet this priority under paragraph (b) above, the entity hearing appeal must have the authority to approve the charter application over the objections of the LEA.**

**Strengths:**

Minnesota law provides for seven types of authorizers, ranging from a traditional district authorizer to the higher education institution (HEI) or non-profit type of authorizer (pg. e22). This diverse approach to authorizing reinforces the State's support for school choice and education reform efforts.

In order to become an authorizer, applicants must apply to the Commissioner and engage in the statutorily-defined process for review and approval. This application process also includes an opportunity for appeal and correction, demonstrating the State's willingness to hear from and work with agencies that wish to authorize in the State. Combined, these demonstrate not only verification of compliance with the law, but also the intent to establish and promulgate strong authorizing.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 2**

**Competitive Preference Priority 4 - Equitable Financing**

- 1. 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 application outlines charter school eligibility to receive state and federal funds in a way that is equitable to their traditional public school peers (pg. e22). This includes specific reference to categorical funding.

Additional opportunities for funding are referenced, including extended time revenue, lease aid, and facilities funding.

Reference is also made to the availability of transportation funding, which is made available to charter schools to utilize and provide directly, or expend through district providers (pg. e23).

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 2**

**Competitive Preference Priority 5 - Charter School Facilities**

- 1. 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:**

Minnesota law provides lease aid to charter schools in a per-pupil amount that reflects average district capital costs (pg. e24). Supplemental evidence was provided that asserts this aid totaled more than \$62 million dollars for the state's 166 charter schools in the most recent fiscal year.

**Weaknesses:**

The rationale is unclear as to why only charter schools in operation for at least six years are eligible to form or organize affiliated nonprofit building corporations (ABCs). This more easily allows them to purchase, expand, renovate, or construct facilities. Only 40 charter schools have done this to date, which is less than ¼ of the charters in the state. Options for less mature charter schools was not described other than a note that they may receive money from any external source for capital facility needs, rather than utilization of state funds.

No reference is made to charter school access to available public facilities, making it unclear whether requirements exist that prevent the potential for local hostility or competition from interfering with charter school start-up or development.

**Reader's Score:** 1

**Competitive Preference Priority 6 - Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools/LEAs**

1. **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**

**Strengths:**

No strengths noted.

**Weaknesses:**

Although reference is made to the dissemination of a 'number of best practices to improve struggling schools' (pg. e24), the examples referenced are contained to videos about 3 high performing charter schools and annual awards given to charters for a variety of compliance areas. No direct connection is made between identification of high performers and ensuring alignment or facilitation with low performers who could benefit from the identified practices. It is unclear how 3 schools, for example, which represent less than 2% of the charter sector, could share in best practices that are relevant to all charter school models, locations, sizes, configurations, compositions, or performance levels.

Evidence was not provided to demonstrate a tangible connection between the dissemination efforts of the State and improvement in low performing schools. Even click rates, for example, on the published videos were not provided to demonstrate that viewing had occurred, let alone that utilization or impact could be substantiated.

Further, the narrative also does not technically describe how the State itself or others utilizes these best practices in working with low performing schools. It merely suggests that these videos or lists of award recipients are published on a website, and available to the public.

Reader's Score: 0

### Competitive Preference Priority 7 - Serving At-Risk Students

1. 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 application provides data to demonstrate the emphasis many charter schools give to serving higher percentage of at-risk students than their traditional school peers (pg. e25). This includes significantly higher rates of students eligible for free and reduced-priced meals, students who identify as minority, and students requiring English Language Acquisition programming.

The State also extends its activities and definition around at-risk students, and utilizes the Minnesota Early Indicator and Response System. This tool allows charter schools to screen individual students in grades six thru nine who are at risk of not completing high school, and further goes on to match potential supports and interventions that can be drawn down and used at a classroom level. This statewide system-specific effort to identifying and meeting the needs of academically at-risk students is a value-add to charter schools as it helps to isolate areas where limited resources and attention can be more specifically and effectively allocated.

#### Weaknesses:

The application states that 'many Minnesota charter schools were created to serve a particular student group...' (pg. e25). However, this is not quantified, making it unclear what proportion of charter schools exist to specifically serve at-risk populations or implement a particular pedagogical approach that supports at-risk students.

Additionally, the data provided demonstrate the sector as a whole serves higher proportions of at-risk students, but does not provide trend or comparative data to ensure the service profiles of charter schools match area schools.

Service to students with individualized education plans (IEPs) by charter schools was not included in the comparative data.

Beyond the tool available to all schools statewide, specific references to the support provided by the applicant to schools that serve at-risk students was not detailed.

Reader's Score: 1

### Competitive Preference Priority 8 - Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing

1. 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:

Minnesota petitioned the first authorizer accountability system, and established the first authorizer application process in the country, establishing its desire to ensure quality authorizing in the state (pg. e26). This approval process directly corresponds to the measures of the annual review, ensuring alignment between front-end and back-end review activities. Both of these procedures incorporate national best practice into their methods. This body of work is evidence of steps taken to ensure authorizing agencies are aware of and implementing best practices.

Specifically, this law and application requires all potential authorizers to detail the applicant's ability to implement the procedures and satisfy state-specified criteria for charter a school (pg. e26). It also includes information on the authorizer's capacity and infrastructure, proposed application criteria and process, contracting process, oversight and evaluation processes, as well as renewal and development criteria. This particular focus on capacity ensures that the process is more than a paper exercise, and looks to assess the people component of authorizing practice in the state. This emphasis on capacity and structure helps to operationalize the implementation component included in the evaluation criterion.

**Weaknesses:**

Although the system for authorizer review is again referenced and summarized in this section of the application (pg. e27), and the emphasis of continuous improvement is mentioned, this ongoing improvement process as overseen by the State is not described in detail. The application asserts that data are used from MAPES to better understand areas for improvement, but specific examples or procedures for doing this were not included in the application. It cannot be determined whether this has yielding ongoing activities, such as in-person or virtual trainings or development of necessary resources, nor can it be determined whether these have been proven to be effective for authorizers seeking improvement.

Further, the first round of the MAPES system and collection occurred in January of 2017 (pg. e27). This makes it additionally unclear whether improvement activities have occurred to date, or whether the current status is more about planning for the design and implementation of improvement activities.

With the focus resting on continuous improvement, it is not detailed what sanctions, interventions, or supports might look like for authorizers that are significantly or chronically low performing looks like.

School performance is stated as not being a current component of authorizer evaluation (pg. e28). This system therefore lacks some of the evidentiary components required to validate subjective reviews of authorizer practice and improvement efforts to date.

**Reader's Score:**     **3**

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**Status:**           Submitted  
**Last Updated:**   06/22/2017 08:49 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/23/2017 08:23 AM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Minnesota Department of Education (U282A170007)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection criteria</b>		
<b>Flexibility</b>		
1. Flexibility	10	9
<b>Sub Total</b>	10	9
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Objectives</b>		
1. Objectives	15	12
<b>Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants</b>		
1. Quality of Subgrant	15	13
<b>State Plan</b>		
1. State Plan	20	20
<b>Parent and Community Involvement</b>		
1. Involvement	10	9
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	15	12
<b>Quality of the Management Plan, Theory of Action</b>		
1. Management Plan	15	12
<b>Sub Total</b>	90	78
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
<b>Periodic Review and Evaluation</b>		
1. Review and Evaluation	5	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	5	0
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
<b>Charter School Oversight</b>		
1. Charter School Oversight	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	5	5
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 3</b>		
<b>Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process</b>		
1. Authorizer other than LEA	2	2
<b>Sub Total</b>	2	2

**Competitive Preference Priority 4**

**Equitable Financing**

1. Equitable Financing	2	2
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority 5**

**Charter School Facilities**

1. Charter School Facilities	2	1
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority 6**

**Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools/LEAs**

1. Struggling Schools	2	1
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority 7**

**Serving At-Risk Students**

1. Serving At-Risk Students	2	1
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority 8**

**Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing**

1. Best Practices	5	3
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>

<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>102</b>
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# Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - Panel 7 - Minnesota - 1: 84.282A

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

Applicant: Minnesota Department of Education (U282A170007)

## Questions

### Selection criteria - Flexibility

1. **The degree of flexibility afforded by the State's charter school law and how the State entity will work to maximize the flexibility provided to charter schools under such law.**

#### Strengths:

The State thoroughly explains the flexibility provided under state law. Minn Stat. 124E.03 provides that a charter school is exempt from statutes and rules applicable to a school, school board or school district (pg. 28). The State demonstrates charter schools are school districts and have the ability to function as an autonomous and independent local education agency. The State thoroughly explains charter schools have fiscal and legal autonomy, can elect their own governing board and can make decisions relating to operations (pg. e29). The State thoroughly explains charter schools can also receive state and federal education funds directly and are exempt from collective bargaining requirements and can contract for services (pg. e10). The State adequately explains teachers can seek credentialing waivers (pg. e29).

#### Weaknesses:

The State does not indicate how it will work to maximize the flexibility that is currently provided to charter schools under the current laws (pg. e30). The State indicates if the grant funds are awarded, the project will assess whether there is a need of charter school credentialing; it is unclear if this will improve flexibility (pg. e30).

Reader's Score: 9

### Selection Criteria - Objectives

1. **The ambitiousness of the State entity's objectives for the quality charter school program carried out under this program.**

#### Strengths:

The State seeks to increase and improve both the quality and quantity of charter schools through four related objectives: increase the number of high-quality charter schools that serve disadvantaged students and the overall number of students served; support charter schools in achieving the objectives of World's Best Workforce legislation; increase quality of charter schools through authorizer training and evaluation; and increase sustainability of charter schools (pg. e32). These objectives are ambitious, clearly thought out and well developed. The State also seeks to increase the quality of both authorizers and charter schools (pg. e32) and explains the process for meaningful dialogue with various stakeholders (pg. e32).

#### Weaknesses:

The third objective does not explain how the role of the authorizer directly increases the quality of Minnesota charter schools (pg. e32). The fourth objective of increasing the sustainability of charter schools is not fully developed and relies on an explanation of a credentialing system for charter school leaders (pg. e32).

Reader's Score: 12

### Selection Criteria - Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants

#### 1. The likelihood that the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the program will meet those objectives and improve educational results for students.

##### Strengths:

This State adequately meets this priority. The State explains subgrants will be allocated with two objectives—to start a new school or significantly expand or replicate high quality schools (pg. e33). There are separate applications for startup and significant expansions (pg. e33). The project narrative is thorough, detailed, and indicates that subgrant applicants are required to detail numerous elements including: the education program, accountability goals, how they meet the state education priorities, governance and management capacity, parent and community outreach and marketing and outreach. The State requires subgrant applicants to demonstrate effective financial management practices and financial sustainability. The State has created rigorous subgrant application requirements which work to ensure that the subgrantees are high quality and will provide demonstrable education results for students. The State demonstrates a strong likelihood that it will meet its objectives of increasing high-quality charter school and replicating high-quality charter schools that will improve education results for students.

##### Weaknesses:

The State does not explain the baseline student achievement levels necessary for replication subgrants which may decrease the feasibility for expansion or replication subgrants although it will not affect the feasibility of new charter schools grants. (pg. e34).

Reader's Score: 13

### Selection Criteria - State Plan

#### 1. The State entity's plan to--

- 1) Adequately monitor the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program;
- 2) Work with the authorized public chartering agencies involved to avoid duplication of work for the charter schools and authorized public chartering agencies; and
- 3) Provide technical assistance and support for--
  - i. The eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program; and
  - ii. Quality authorizing efforts in the State.

##### Strengths:

This State adequately addresses this criterion because the State has a sufficient plan to monitor subgrantees programmatic and financial activities that are clearly aligned with project period and type of grant (pg. e37). The State will also offer webinars and in-person training sessions as well as an in-person site visit (pg. e37).

The State adequately avoids duplication of work by allowing the required charter school annual report to be combined with the annual World's Best Workforce Report (pg. e38). The State also indicates regular coordination between charter schools and authorizers (pg. e38).

The State has a comprehensive monitoring procedure after subgrants are awarded that includes mid-award risk assessment through on-site program visits during the implementation phase of the subgrants (pg. e37). There is also a risk assessment for new schools that do not have a financial history at the beginning of the grant period (pg. e37).

The State regularly provides day-to-day technical assistance and training to grantees (pg. e39). The State thoroughly explains that there is ongoing technical assistance such as site visits, quarterly technical assistance and an annual



Charter School Training as well as a web-based Boot Camp (pg. e40).

The State also supports quality authorizing efforts through dedicated charter center staff within the Department of Education (pg. e40).

**Weaknesses:**

No identified weaknesses

**Reader's Score: 20**

**Selection Criteria - Parent and Community Involvement**

**1. The State entity's plan to solicit and consider input from parents and other members of the community on the implementation and operation of charter schools in the State.**

**Strengths:**

The State adequately addresses this criterion. The State operates a Family Engagement Committee as well as a Family Engagement website. The State clearly states that charter school boards must also include at least one parent or guardian who is not a charter school employee and one community member. The State also requires subgrantees to detail their parent and community engagement efforts in their grant application (pg. e42).

**Weaknesses:**

Although the State requires charter school boards to include one parent or guardian and one community member, the application did not explain how the State is soliciting and considering input from parents and community members. The State does not clearly explain how parent and community engagement will be measured after the subgrant is awarded.

**Reader's Score: 9**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design**

**1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the State entity's charter school subgrant program, including the extent to which the project design furthers the State entity's overall strategy for increasing the number of high-quality charter schools in the State and improving student academic achievement. In determining the quality of the project design, the Secretary considers the quality of the State entity's process for awarding subgrants for planning, program design, and initial implementation including--**

- 1) The subgrant application and peer review process, timelines for these processes, and how the State entity intends to ensure that subgrants will be awarded to eligible applicants demonstrating the capacity to create high-quality charter schools; and**
- 2) A reasonable year-by-year estimate, with supporting evidence, of (i) the number of subgrants the State entity expects to award during the project period and the average size of those subgrants, including an explanation of any assumptions upon which the estimates are based; and (ii) if the State entity has previously received a CSP grant, the percentage of eligible applicants that were awarded subgrants and how this percentage related to the overall quality of the applicant pool.**

**Strengths:**

The State has a well-developed response in addressing this criterion because the project narrative was clear and easy to follow. The processes are adequately developed across the three subgrant categories. The State requires all grant applications to be subject to peer reviewers from the Minnesota charter school community and education community. There is a well-developed peer review process. Once selected, there are peer reviewer trainings and a timeline for

independent review and detailed peer review ratings.

The State provides a clear timeline for the subgrant application, peer review process, selection and award process (pg. e 42). The criteria is also satisfied because the State clearly outlines the total grants it intends to distribute during the five-year grant term (pg. e44). The State provides a reasonable estimate of the number of subgrants that will be awarded each year (pg. e44). The State also thoroughly explains that the average size of the subgrants are reasonable and the planning grant amounts are reasonable (pg. e44-45). The State clearly identifies its strategy to increase high quality charter schools through an increase in new, existing and replicated schools because each subgrant applicant must clearly explain its educational program and its accountability goals.

Under its 2012 CSP grant, 53% of grant applications were funded. The State established a definition for high-quality charter schools (pg. e45).

**Weaknesses:**

While the application indicates the percentage of eligible applicants that were awarded subgrants, it does not explain how this percentage related to the overall quality of the applicant pool nor does it indicate the percentage of high quality schools; it merely outlines the process for evaluating a high-quality school (pg. e45).

**Reader's Score:** 12

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan, Theory of Action**

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and the project's theory of action. In determining the quality of the management plan and the project's theory of action, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

- 1) **The quality, including the cohesiveness and strength of reasoning, of the "logic model" (as defined in this notice), and the extent to which it addresses the role of the grant in promoting the State-level strategy for using charter schools to improve educational outcomes for students through CSP subgrants for planning, program design, and initial implementation and other strategies;**
- 2) **The extent to which the State entity's project-specific performance measures, including any measures required by the Department, support the logic model; and**
- 3) **The adequacy of the management plan to--**
  - i. **Achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including the existence of clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks; and**
  - ii. **Address any compliance issues or findings related to the CSP that are identified in an audit or other monitoring review.**

**Strengths:**

The State's management plan clearly aligns the objectives and strategies. The logic model assumptions are well reasoned (p. e46) and the logic model demonstrates a clear understanding of applicable resources, activities, outputs and short, mid and long range outcomes (pg e47). The performance measurers directly align to and support the logic model. The management plan is clearly aligned to achieve the objectives within the budget constraints and time milestones and each objective has clear responsibilities, timing and milestones (pg. e49-56).

The applicant explains that compliance issues related to insufficient guidance regarding lottery practices and unallowable expenses in sub-grant budgets have been adequately addressed by the State (pg. e57).

**Weaknesses:**

The State does not explain how previous feedback from the CSP 2012 has been implemented (pg. e44).

It is also unclear how the Logic Model satisfies the objectives of the World's Best Workforce legislation (pg. e48). The State does not adequately explain how it handles non-compliance of subgrantees (pg. e39). Even though the State

explains that compliance issues related to its previous grant, this does not clearly demonstrate that the State has a method to address any compliance issues or finding that may be identified in a future audit or other monitoring review (pg. e57).

**Reader's Score:** 12

### Priority Questions

#### Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Periodic Review and Evaluation

- 1. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that the State provides for periodic review and evaluation by the authorized public chartering agency of each charter school at least once every five years, unless required more frequently by State law, and takes steps to ensure that such reviews take place. The review and evaluation must serve to determine whether the charter school is meeting the terms of the school's charter and meeting or exceeding the student academic achievement requirements and goals for charter schools as set forth in the school's charter or under State law, a State regulation, or a State policy, provided that the student academic achievement requirements and goals for charter schools established by that policy meet or exceed those set forth under applicable State law or State regulation. This periodic review and evaluation must include an opportunity for the authorized public chartering agency to take appropriate action or impose meaningful consequences on the charter school, if necessary.**

#### **Strengths:**

The State satisfies this requirement because Minnesota requires a formal written performance renewal and permits a renewal term up to five years. (pg. e20). The State requires that the performance renewal system evaluate whether a charter school is increasing student achievement and meeting the goals of the charter school agreement. (pg. e20). The State's periodic review also permits nonrenewal and termination and requires charter contracts to include a process for school closure (pg. e20).

#### **Weaknesses:**

The State does not demonstrate there are steps to ensure the chartering agency has mechanisms to take appropriate action or impose meaningful consequences on the charter school.

**Reader's Score:** 0

#### Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Charter School Oversight

- 1. To meet this priority, an application must demonstrate that State law, regulations, or other policies in the State where the applicant is located require the following:**
  - a) That each charter school in the State--**
    - 1. Operates under a legally binding charter or performance contract between itself and the school's authorized public chartering agency that describes the rights and responsibilities of the school and the authorized public chartering agency;**
    - 2. Conducts annual, timely, and independent audits of the school's financial statements that are filed with the school's authorized public chartering agency; and**
    - 3. Demonstrates improved student academic achievement; and**
  - b) That all authorized public chartering agencies in the State use increases in student academic achievement for all groups of students described in section 1111(c)(2) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 6311(c)(2)) as one of the most important factors when determining whether to renew or revoke a school's charter.**

**Strengths:**

This priority is met because each charter school operates under an agreement, with a state-approved authorizer, that outlines rights and obligations of the charter school (pg. e21). Minnesota law requires annual independent audit requirements (pg. e21). The State adequately demonstrates charter school audit requirements. The State requires that charter schools awarded a charter school grant undergo periodic financial monitoring and reconciliation. Although there are not State standards and achievements; charter school achievement level outcomes are identified in the contract between the charter school and the authorizer and the charter school is bound by the outcomes that are listed in the contract (pg. e21). The State thoroughly explains that all charter school contracts must indicate that improving all student learning and all student achievement is the most important factor in determining whether to renew a charter contract (pg. e21).

**Weaknesses:**

No identified weaknesses

**Reader's Score: 5**

**Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Authorizer other than LEA or Appeal Process****1. To meet this priority, the applicant must demonstrate that the State--**

- a) Provides for one authorized public chartering agency that is not an LEA, such as a State chartering board, for each individual or entity seeking to operate a charter school pursuant to State law; or**
- b) In the case of a State in which LEAs are the only authorized public chartering agencies, allows for an appeals process for the denial of an application for a charter school.**

**Note: In order to meet this priority under paragraph (b) above, the entity hearing appeal must have the authority to approve the charter application over the objections of the LEA.**

**Strengths:**

The State adequately meets this priority by explaining the State allows for six different types of authorizers that are not local education agencies including charitable organizations, private college within the State, state colleges and universities and single purpose authorizers (pg. e22). An entity must apply to the Minnesota Department of Education to become an authorizer (pg. e22).

**Weaknesses:**

No identified weaknesses

**Reader's Score: 2**

**Competitive Preference Priority 4 - Equitable Financing**

- 1. 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 priority is thoroughly addressed; the application explains each charter school operates as a local education agency (pg. e22). The State outlines Minn. Stat 124E.20 that permits equitable funding on a 1:1 per pupil basis (pg. e25). The State further demonstrates that special education revenue is also distributed equitably. The State clearly explains charter schools are also entitled to additional types of aid including transportation aid, referendum revenue, extended time revenue, lease aid and long-term facilities maintenance revenue (pg. e23).

**Weaknesses:**

No identified weaknesses

**Reader's Score: 2**

**Competitive Preference Priority 5 - Charter School Facilities**

**1. 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 State clearly demonstrates charter schools can lease buildings and apply for building lease aid (pg. e24). The State provides a thorough description of affiliated nonprofit building corporations that can be created by charter schools that have been operating for six years (pg. e24). The State also explains funds allocated by the State Board of Education may be used for leases (pg. e24). There are also no limits on capital facility sources (pg.e24).

**Weaknesses:**

Although state law permits nonprofit building corporations, only charters in existence for at least six years are eligible to form affiliated nonprofit building corporations; it is unclear how this timeframe maximizes equitable financing (pg. e24).

**Reader's Score: 1**

**Competitive Preference Priority 6 - Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools/LEAs**

**1. 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**

**Strengths:**

The State adequately addresses this priority by previously offering charter school program best practice grants (pg. e24), and awarding and highlighting charter school best practices through Innovation Awards which demonstrate the innovative ways charter schools are serving at-risk students and disseminating those award winning best practices through website and blog features (pg. e24).

**Weaknesses:**

The State does not identify how best practices are being used in low performing schools. The State states that if it is awarded a CSP grant, it will identify creative ways to use the Innovation Awards to help struggling schools (pg. e25) but does not indicate what it is currently doing to ensure that struggling schools are receiving information about best practices to improve struggling schools (pg. e25).

Reader's Score: 1

### Competitive Preference Priority 7 - Serving At-Risk Students

1. 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 State demonstrates a focused system to screen and identify students who are at risk of not completing high school in four years and utilizes supports and interventions (pg. e25). Charter school students in traditional districts can participate in State approved alternative learning program (pg. e26).

**Weaknesses:**

The State does not provide qualitative or quantitative information on the specific interventions that are used to support at-risk students. Although the State indicates that many charter schools serve as State Approved Alternative Learning programs, the State does not clearly explain the components of the program and how it specifically relates to improving education outcomes for at risk students.

Reader's Score: 1

### Competitive Preference Priority 8 - Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing

1. 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 State thoroughly demonstrates its use of a multi-tiered process for approval of new charter applications. The State explains the Authorizer Performance Evaluation System and how it identifies best practices for charter school authorizing (pg. e27). The State sufficiently explains that the Performance Evaluation System provided includes specific training, development and technical assistance practices to ensure high quality authorizing practices.

**Weaknesses:**

The MAPES data collection was only completed in January 2017. The State does not identify Interventions and support for authorizers that are not following standards and best practices (pg. e27). The State does not describe in sufficient detail the process for ongoing review.

Reader's Score: 3

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