

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/02/2020 10:56 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Texas Education Agency (S282A200011)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	35	29
Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants		
1. Subgrant Applicants	15	15
State Plan		
1. State Plan	35	35
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	15	9
Sub Total	100	88
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
1. CPP3	3	3
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
1. CPP4	4	4
Competitive Preference Priority 5		
1. CPP5	2	2
Competitive Preference Priority 6		
1. CPP6	3	3
Competitive Preference Priority 7		
1. CPP7	4	4
Sub Total	16	16
Total	116	104

Technical Review Form

Panel #12 - CSP State Entities - 9: 84.282A

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Texas Education Agency (S282A200011)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. a. Quality of Project Design

The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

Reader's Score: 29

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale;

Strengths:

The state has prioritized the use of charter policy to increase the number and percentage of students who attend high-quality schools. It will be accomplished by authorizing new, high quality charter schools and by expanding and replicating existing high quality charter schools. The applicant desires to significantly increase the number and percentage of disadvantaged students in A & B rated schools and a decrease in the number and percentage of students in poorly performing schools. (e37-e38)

The efforts to expand district authorization with quality charter schools demonstrates the applicant's desire to provide more innovative, high quality options for their students. (e38)

A stated outcome of the proposed project is that the partners identified to provide technical assistance between charters and LEAS will also provide a framework for structuring mutually beneficial relationships to help improve or turn around struggling schools. (e43)

Weaknesses:

Although the applicant draws upon 20 years' worth of data to support its Logic Model, the applicant does not provide any data to support a desire to ensure students will be prepared for success in post-secondary endeavors (e37) even though it lists this as a long term outcome on its Logic Model (e38). There is no information provided as to how this desired outcome is related to the project's objectives.

Reader's Score: 12

2. (2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible; and

Sub

Strengths:

The applicant intends to secure a contract with an external entity with CSP subgrant monitoring experience to monitor the CSP subgrantees. Monitoring will follow the protocols developed by the state's Division of Charter School Administration and will produce post monitoring reports for review. (e56-e57)

Included in the proposal was a clearly defined and thorough process for evaluating the proposed project. The plan includes 3-4 specific performance measures for each of the four stated objectives that appear achievable and relevant to the project. For each performance measure there are clear definitions for baseline data, performance target and data collection responsibilities and timeline. (e72-e75)

Weaknesses:

There appears to be a disconnect between the number of stated objectives in the applicant's Theory of Action (e37) and Logic Model (e38) compared to its description of "objectives and performance measures" chart (e72-e75). The chart includes an objective IV: GPRA Measures that do not correspond with or are addressed in any of the applicant's proposed project activities or outcomes.

Reader's Score: 12

3. (3) The ambitiousness of the State entity's objectives for the quality charter school program carried out under the CSP State Entities program

Strengths:

With its previous CSP grant, the applicant averaged awarding four new charter subgrants annually. This proposal has an ambitious yet attainable goal of increasing the number of new charter subgrants to 10 in each year of the grant period. (e40)

The applicant provided a sound explanation for reducing the number of expansion/replication awards with the intent of creating a more competitive pool of high quality charter applicants. (e40-e41) Previous district charter subgrant applicants proved to be ineligible for grants because they did not meet federal definitions. The state's number of district sponsored charters doubled between 2018 and 2019. By extending targeted technical assistance to district authorizers and their prospective charters, the applicant hopes to award ten grants each year of the grant period to eligible district charters. (e41)

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants

1. b. Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants

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

Strengths:

To ensure the eligible subgrant applicants meet the objective of the state grant to fund schools that serve at risk students, the applicant revised their application scoring process to include priority points for schools located in Qualified Opportunity Zones. (e11)

The applicant has chosen to limit the number of subgrant awards in hopes of increasing the quality of its applicant pool. The state commissioner of education has adopted new standards for new charter schools and the expansion/replication of existing schools to assure only high quality charters are approved to open or modify their existing charter contracts. The subgrant application process will prioritize funding only to new schools that have passed the rigorous state application process and expansion/replication schools with the strongest records of student achievement. (e46)

With respect to preparing and incentivizing districts to be effective authorizers of charter schools, selected applicants will be chosen in part based on the strength of their authorizer. Competitive preference points will be awarded to applicants who can demonstrate the strength of their district authorizer as measured in accord to NACSA’s principles, standards, and effective practices. (e48)

The applicant provided a clear description of the subgrantee review process including timelines. This review includes an initial review to determine completeness of application and assurance of eligibility requirements having been met. The second review is done by external reviewers and scored based on criteria and guidelines described in the subgrant application. (e49-e50)

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - State Plan

1. c. State Plan

The State entity’s plan to--

Reader's Score: 35

Sub

1. (1) Adequately monitor the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity’s program;

Strengths:

An independent outside contractor will be hired to effectively monitor the subgrantees’ grant performance. (e50) The state’s Federal Fiscal Monitoring Division conducts annual risk assessments of all subgrantees and the division may impose enforcement action for noncompliance. The state and the statewide Charter School Network provide specific technical assistance and training to improve a school’s identified deficiencies. (e55)

Authorizers are required to assess charter school academic performance and review financial audits on an annual basis. All state charters are measured using a performance framework that includes academic, financial, and operational assessments. (e32)

Sub

The state requires all schools to participate in the Results Driven Accountability System (RDA), a data monitoring system that reports annually for specific program areas including English Language Learner and Special Education programs. (e31 and e61)

To comply with federal regulations to evaluate each subgrantee's risk of non-compliance with federal statutes, regulations and terms and conditions of the award, the state's Federal Fiscal Monitoring Division conducts an annual risk assessment of all subgrantees. The risk assessment is updated annually and includes weighted risk indicators derived from multiple sources, including the authorizer's performance framework and the state's RDA data. (e55)

Subgrantees are expected to continue operating as authorized, receiving state and federal program funding after the term of the subgrant. (e57)

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 10

2. (2) Work with the authorized public chartering agencies involved to avoid duplication of work for the charter schools and authorized public chartering agencies;

Strengths:

The state has a Data Governance Board that is charged with monitoring the information content of all state data collection requests made of all public schools to assure that the data have not already been collected by the state and that the data collected is needed to comply with federal and state statute. (e57) The applicant provided an example that data collections required of district authorizers and state charter schools is information necessary for charter specific monitoring purposes. The Charter School Performance Framework is entirely populated with data the state extracts from information that state charter schools submit through the state's student data system. (e58)

The state will coordinate with district authorizers for CSP related data collection and monitoring activities so that information the district requires for monitoring purposes in its role as charter authorizer and the information the state requires as CSP subgrantor is standardized and collected using the same reporting tool. (e58)

The state plans to integrate the CSP grant application directly into the new school application, eliminating duplicative efforts in reviewing both a start-up application and a separate grant application. (e51)

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (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;**

Sub

Strengths:

i. Regional Education Service Centers serve as the technical support arm of the state agency and provide technical assistance to all eligible subgrantees.(e28)

The use of independent partners such as Relay Graduate School of Education and the New Teacher Project provide instructional support with programming and technical assistance rooted in charter school best practices specific to instructional leadership. (e29)

Specific to the applicants requirement that it opens new charter schools or charter school models that are High Schools, subgrantees opening replication or expansion high schools will be supported through the differentiated technical assistance approach carried out by the state. High schools will receive support tailored to the context of operating effective high schools related to any necessary academic support, community engagement, board governance, and best practices for financial and fiscal sustainability. (e44)

Additional technical assistance is provided through the state’s Division of System Support and Innovation through its School Redesign Fund. This effort promotes resource and knowledge sharing specific to re-start and turn-around strategies for school improvement. (e59)

ii. The state has established an Authorizers’ Leadership Academy to continue to build authorizing capacity among school districts and has developed resource documents, including a model district authorizing policy. The Academy offers training via competency-based online modules and an intensive cohort style academy. It is intended to provide additional support around dissemination of best practices. (e22, e34, e60)

The state has established an intensive learning network, System of Great Schools Network, as part of a greater initiative aimed at reducing the number of low performing schools in the state by 50 percent. This network provides an authorizer management model that builds capacity to create and authorize new innovative schools and replicate/expand high quality existing schools. (e22)

The Effective Schools Framework is yet another state initiative created to help share best practices from charter schools and effective charter authorizing processes. This school improvement framework includes sets resources to be used as diagnostic and planning tools for struggling schools to improve student academic outcomes. (e25)

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 10

4. (4) 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; and

Strengths:

Both state and district authorized charters must provide evidence of community support in their initial charter application. All applicants for CSP subgrants must provide evidence of both parent and community outreach and support, including how the proposed plan matches with the needs of the community. The applicant intends to produce and disseminate through its Authorizer Leadership Academy and System of Great Schools Network, community engagement tools. Network participants will receive intensive support and coaching specific to understanding parent and community demand and helping families navigate school choices. (e64)

Sub

A charter school must demonstrate how it will solicit and consider input from parents and other members of the community on implementation and operation of the proposed charter campus in its charter grant application. (e 45) Along with evidence of community support, they must explicitly articulate how community needs were assessed. They must also report findings from their community outreach and the methodology used to determine the needs and responsiveness of their proposed plan. (e63)

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 5

5. (5) 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 states the existence of both state and district charter schools is grounded in the presumption that state laws ordinarily governing traditional public schools do not apply to charters. District sponsored charters enjoy the same scope of freedom as state chartered schools. These freedoms include exception to statutory requirements related to school personnel, compensation, teacher certification, roles and responsibilities, annual days of service and leave. (e68)

The commissioner of education has board waiver authority, which enables a charter to expand upon the state flexibility. The state has partnered with a regional Educational Service Center to develop a technical assistance network charged with sharing opportunities to maximize the advantages of the flexibility afforded to charter schools. (e66)

Additional flexibility provides a streamlined process for amending a state charter contract based on a school's strong track record. The state promotes the flexibility afforded to district charters and has published a model district charter policy to maximize the autonomy of local charters. The state requires districts to submit information on the autonomy it affords the charters it authorizes. (e67)

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. d. Quality of the Management Plan

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

Reader's Score: 9

Sub

1. (1) **The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks; and**

Strengths:

The applicant provided a thorough management plan that reflects clearly the division of duties, the project timelines, and specific activities and milestones aligned to the proposal's objectives. Project management will be shared by the Division of Charter Administration and the Division of System Support and Innovation. Additional state divisions will be engaged as needed for specific resources. (e68)

The seven key personnel identified appear to possess the unique talents and qualifications required to carry out the project. These qualifications were evidenced in the attached resumes. (e80-e102)

The proposal included a compliance timeline covering the duration of the project (e70-e71) and a progress monitoring plan aligned to the applicant's management plan. (e72-e75)

Weaknesses:

Although the proposal identifies key personnel, the response would have benefitted from a narrative describing the specific roles and responsibilities assigned to the individuals. It is not clear who directs the project or what their duties entail. (e68-e69)

Reader's Score: 8

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

Strengths:

The applicant intends to contract with an external vendor to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the CSP grant. The purpose of the evaluation is to examine the effectiveness and impact of the grant, identify promising practices, and examine successful strategies with the CSP subgrantees. (e29)

Weaknesses:

The plan lacks significant details about any types of feedback it will solicit; the steps to collect the feedback; or how any feedback will be analyzed to adjust the proposed project throughout the duration of the grant.

Reader's Score: 1

3. (3) **The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.**

Sub

Strengths:

There were no strengths identified.

Weaknesses:

It was not clear in either the applicant proposal (e68-e71) or the referenced Appendix F (e204-e205) what the time commitments would be for the project director and other key personnel. There was no narrative provided for either table nor a descriptive narrative provided in the budget. (e255)

Reader's Score: 0

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 3

1. CPP3 Competitive Preference Priority 3: Equitable Financing

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

Strengths:

District schools generate funding on the same basis as traditional schools within a district. (e19)

State funding for all public schools including state charter schools is generated through a weighted average daily attendance formula. Weighted adjustments are based on the number of students in special education, career and technology, English Language learners, state compensatory, and gifted and talented programs. (e20)

State law evens out funding for state charters that are not able to collect local taxes. The additional amount is a formula driven state-wide average district tax rate and state-wide average adjustments for specific schoolwide characteristics. (e20)

Charter schools are eligible to receive transportation and other types of operational funding on the same basis as school districts. (e20)

The state department of education has published a model district charter policy highlighting the importance of equitable funding for local charter schools and is actively taking steps to ensure equitable and timely funding. (e22)

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 4

1. CPP4 Competitive Preference Priority 4: Charter School Facilities

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

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

Strengths:

The state provides \$1,000 weighted per student reimbursement to eligible new campuses for the 1st and 2nd years of operation and eligible on the same terms as traditional schools. (e23)

The state has been recognized in the top ten nationally for its facilities financing and access to public space by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS). The state law incorporates a number of NAPCS model law provisions regarding equitable access to capital funding and facilities. (e23)

State charter school law enables schools to participate in a state generated bond program. (e23)

The state legislature created a Charter School Finance Corporation that serves as state supported bond issuer that provides credit enhancement services to enable charters to secure facility financing at lower costs. (e24)

State law requires districts to give charters first right of refusal to buy, lease, or use unused or underused district facilities. (e24)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were identified.

Reader's Score: 4

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 5

1. CPP5 Competitive Preference Priority 5: Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools and Local Educational Agencies

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

Strengths:

The state provides incentives for districts to contract and partner with open enrollment charter schools, universities, non-profits, and governmental entities that encourage and reward partnerships between charters and traditional districts. (e25)

The state has created three specific initiatives in an effort to disseminate best practices to improve struggling schools. All "F" rated schools in the state are required to use the Effective Schools Framework to conduct an aligned diagnostic and develop an aligned school improvement plan. (e26)

A Partnership Initiative pays out incentives and supports district-charter partnerships so that districts benefit from the expertise of successful charter management organizations. (e26)

A System of Great Schools Network and state Authorizer Leadership Academy support districts to apply best practices in the area of charter school authorizing, as well as help districts understand how to apply these principles throughout their district. (e27)

Weaknesses:

There we no weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 6

1. CPP6 Competitive Preference Priority 6: Serving At-Risk Students

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

Strengths:

State law prioritizes the creation of charter schools dedicated to serving at risk students (e29), and schools designed to serve at risk students are not counted in the state cap on the number of state charter schools. (e30)

District and charter schools with high drop-out rates are required to annually submit a plan that identifies how their state compensatory education allotment will create and carry out research-based strategies aimed at future drop-out prevention. Schools may be required to submit a plan or MOU with public junior colleges to provide a drop-out recovery program for its students. (e30)

The state has fully adopted a college and career readiness agenda with hopes of ensuring students have the necessary skills to graduate and succeed in college and the workplace that effectively reduces the number of drop-outs. (e31)

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 7

1. CPP7 Competitive Preference Priority 7: Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which it has

taken steps to ensure that all authorized public chartering agencies implement best practices for charter school authorizing.

Strengths:

The applicant states that it is committed to using best practices for charter school authorizers statewide as evidenced by the state's adoption of all twelve of the NACSA Essential Authorizing Practices. (e33)

The System of Great Schools Network provides technical assistance that includes a focus on district authorizing practices as a strategy to "develop and expand great schooling options." This annual planning process evaluates school performance for quality, along with community need and demand, in order to take strategic actions to improve schools and provide parents with the programs they desire. (e34)

The state has created an Authorizer Leadership Academy that provides districts training in the NASCA Model Authorizers Practices. (e33) Districts that participate in the SGS and the Leadership Academy are eligible to receive priority points on their CSP application. (e48)

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 4

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/02/2020 10:56 AM

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Texas Education Agency (S282A200011)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	35	27
Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants		
1. Subgrant Applicants	15	15
State Plan		
1. State Plan	35	34
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	15	8
Sub Total	100	84
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
1. CPP3	3	2
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
1. CPP4	4	4
Competitive Preference Priority 5		
1. CPP5	2	2
Competitive Preference Priority 6		
1. CPP6	3	2
Competitive Preference Priority 7		
1. CPP7	4	3
Sub Total	16	13
Total	116	97

Technical Review Form

Panel #12 - CSP State Entities - 9: 84.282A

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Texas Education Agency (S282A200011)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. a. Quality of Project Design

The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

Reader's Score: 27

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale;

Strengths:

The application includes a reasonable theory of action to prepare more students for postsecondary success by increasing the number of students in A or B rated schools, decreasing the number of students in low-performing schools, and improving authorizers to drive accountability and improvement (e37). The logic model on e38-39 expands on these ideas.

The application also calls for the state to authorize more charters, to award grants, provide technical assistance, and improve networking and learning among schools and LEAs (e39). The ultimate goal is to improve achievement by increasing the number of students in highly rated schools, decreasing the number of students in low-performing schools, and improving authorizers. The ideas are logically related to each other and to the overall rationale of improving postsecondary readiness.

Weaknesses:

While the logic model expands on the theory of action, the application does not cite research to support it. As written, it is also somewhat confusing. For example, the theory suggests that increasing the number of students in highly rated schools, decreasing the number of students in low-performing schools, and improving authorizers will drive accountability and improvement. However postsecondary success is listed as a separate goal from these three, rather than as an outcome that they drive (e38 – e39).

Reader's Score: 12

2. (2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible; and

Sub

Strengths:

The objectives as described on pp. e72-e75 are reasonably measurable and will produce data at least annually. For the most part, they are specific, achievable, and timely. Three methods of monitoring are described on p. e54: “(1) TEA’s comprehensive risk-based monitoring system (state and district charters); (2) ongoing standard and CSP-specific monitoring routines; and (3) monitoring reviews conducted in Charter and District Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST) and the Results Driven Accountability (RDA) system.”

Weaknesses:

It is not clear why the number of charter schools in operation around the nation is relevant to this project, nor how the student achievement targets for Objective 4 were derived (e75).

Reader's Score: 11

3. (3) The ambitiousness of the State entity’s objectives for the quality charter school program carried out under the CSP State Entities program

Strengths:

This application shows some ambition by calling for more state charters than the state’s previous CSP award. The state intends to do this through a call for fewer but better replications/expansions of state charters, as well as more and higher-quality district charters (e39-42). It also calls for more A-B rated schools and an increase in student achievement on specific tests (e74-75). All of this expansion and improvement will be attempted even after some experiences with weaker applications in the past, which also adds to its ambitiousness.

Weaknesses:

The state intends to start more state charters during the grant period (10 per year statewide instead of the recent average of four), but also to reduce the number of expansions (from a recent average of 11 to 6, p. e40). This may increase the quality of applicants and schools in the program, but it is not made clear how this aspect is necessarily an “ambitious” approach.

Reader's Score: 4

Selection Criteria - Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants

1. b. Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants

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

Strengths:

The required topics for the state’s Request for Application (RFA) (e45) and the process (e49) are reasonable to ensure strong applicants are chosen, as they cover curriculum, governance, operational, and fiscal issues necessary to successful charter schools

The application shows a consistent awareness that the state needs to increase the quality of applications, and intends to do this through better screening and a more competitive process with fewer awards but higher award amounts. The application also has a focus on increasing the number of high school charters (e46).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - State Plan

1. c. State Plan

The State entity's plan to--

Reader's Score: 34

Sub

1. (1) Adequately monitor the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program;

Strengths:

The state has previous experience with Charter School Program (CSP) awards and monitoring. As noted above, the state's three methods of monitoring (TEA's system, its CSP-specific system, and its charter/district financial review system) all indicate an ability to adequately monitor subgrantees. Annual risk assessments by the state as well as routine monitoring, including site visits, support the application's arguments that it has the capacity and experience to monitor its subgrantees.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

2. (2) Work with the authorized public chartering agencies involved to avoid duplication of work for the charter schools and authorized public chartering agencies;

Strengths:

The state has experience mitigating this problem; it has a system in place to avoid the state collecting data twice. TEA will also work with LEAs to avoid duplication of work (e57-58), for example by leveraging ongoing audit work done for other purposes.

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (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:

- i. The applicant appears to have the capacity to provide technical assistance to subgrantees. The application explains that the state will continue its ongoing charter technical assistance for state charters and will continue its work with district charters, including a summer summit, the Texas Authorizer Leadership Academy, and other specific, tailored support services, (e58-59), including support for recruitment and retention (e62).
- ii. The applicant also appears to have the capacity to provide technical support for authorizers. The application states that the state will expand its authorizer assistance, to include continuation of the Texas Authorizer Leadership Academy, and the creation of an authorizer handbook consisting of "model policies, application procedures, performance contracts, and parent and community engagement tools" in order to address authorizers' needs.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

4. (4) 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; and

Strengths:

Some public input is likely to be considered, at least at a school level. The application notes that public outreach is required of state and district charters, and states intentions for more parent engagement by producing "community engagement tools for broad dissemination" (e64). The "dashboard" of public input created for reach charter school is another example of the application making meaningful use of community opinion (e63).

Weaknesses:

While the application notes the public outreach requirement and has plans to produce the handbook, how that will be disseminated and how much of an impact above and beyond the current requirements this program would push schools to engage with the public is not clear. Aside from broad statements about requirements for all schools, timelines for such activities are not noted.

Sub

Reader's Score: 4

5. (5) 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's charter school law allows for broad flexibility including flexibility regarding "calendars and hours of operation, student/teacher ratios and class sizes, transportation offerings, facility configurations (within local safety and zoning limitations), and geographic service boundaries," among other areas not specifically prohibited by federal or other state laws (e65). Recent changes have enabled expansions of successful models to open faster than they previously could (e65-68).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. d. Quality of the Management Plan

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

Reader's Score: 8

Sub

1. (1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks; and

Strengths:

At a high level, the application's plan should allow the objectives to be achieved. A broad timeline with responsible offices is included on pp. e70-e71. The plan covers the activities that will need to occur for the project to be accomplished, over the various cycles of the grant term. An adequate selection of project team members, with relevant experience, is listed on p. e69, including school and project management, finance, research, and work specifically with charter school creation and expansion.

Weaknesses:

As noted above, the objectives listed on pp. e72-e75 are measurable. What is not clear is who is finally responsible for particular tasks, nor how the team will know when to make course corrections if necessary (and who will be responsible for doing so).

Reader's Score: 7

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

Strengths:

Some feedback is likely to happen as a matter of course over the duration of the project. Between events like the summer summits, and the ongoing interactions that will occur due to the state's routine monitoring and site visits, the applicant will receive some feedback on its work. Feedback and improvement are listed on p. e225 as part of the technical assistance network.

Weaknesses:

Other than the technical assistance mentioned, continuous improvement is mentioned in the application generally as a process for the districts as part of their ongoing work, but not as part of the state's work. Feedback/continuous improvement are not mentioned separately as aspects of the program team's work, but are included as an assumption that the districts will have to work to improve.

Reader's Score: 1

3. (3) The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.

Strengths:

No strengths noted.

Weaknesses:

While a set of team members is listed (e69), it is not clear from the application what percentage of each team member's time will be spent on this particular project.

Reader's Score: 0

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 3

1. CPP3 Competitive Preference Priority 3: Equitable Financing

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

Strengths:

State charter schools are supposed to receive equitable funding compared to conventional public schools according to Texas law, and a study cited indicates that they do receive approximately 95 percent of that funding (e19).

Weaknesses:

It is unclear (data not presented) how well the district charter schools negotiate their local funding amounts, and so it is unclear whether the district charters' funding is equitable or not.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 4

1. CPP4 Competitive Preference Priority 4: Charter School Facilities

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

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

Strengths:

Texas provides bonds and other funding for charter school facilities, as well as the right of first refusal on unused public buildings (e24).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 5

1. CPP5 Competitive Preference Priority 5: Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools and Local Educational Agencies

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

Strengths:

The state supports a number of ways for conventional schools to partner with charter schools and others to improve practices, and the legislature has funded programs for LEAs to learn from charter networks (e25-27). For example, all F-rated schools must complete a defined diagnostic assessment and create a school improvement plan (e26). The

legislature has also provided charter-like flexibility for LEAs in some instances, by designating them as “Districts of Innovation,” and granting them charter-like flexibility (e28).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 6

1. CPP6 Competitive Preference Priority 6: Serving At-Risk Students

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

Strengths:

The state funds compensatory programs for low-performing schools, and Texas charter school law prioritizes chartering schools in low-performing areas (e30). The state also provides funding for dropout prevention programs (e30).

Weaknesses:

The law prioritizes charters in low-performing areas and the programs listed, but it is not clear that this application prioritizes dropout prevention, recovery, and career counseling beyond what the state already does.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 7

1. CPP7 Competitive Preference Priority 7: Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing

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

Strengths:

TEA evaluates charter schools both academically and operationally. TEA follows National Association for Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) best practices for authorizers, including guidance on applicant interviews, renewal and revocation criteria, annual reporting, and other items (e33).

Weaknesses:

While the state evaluates local authorizers' policies and disallows applications for subgrants from authorizers who violate state law, it is unclear from the application how wide the gap is between the best practices the state follows, and the practices local authorizers actually follow.

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/02/2020 10:56 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/02/2020 10:56 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Texas Education Agency (S282A200011)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	35	23
Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants		
1. Subgrant Applicants	15	15
State Plan		
1. State Plan	35	34
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	15	11
Sub Total	100	83
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
1. CPP3	3	3
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
1. CPP4	4	2
Competitive Preference Priority 5		
1. CPP5	2	2
Competitive Preference Priority 6		
1. CPP6	3	3
Competitive Preference Priority 7		
1. CPP7	4	4
Sub Total	16	14
Total	116	97

Technical Review Form

Panel #12 - CSP State Entities - 9: 84.282A

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Texas Education Agency (S282A200011)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. a. Quality of Project Design

The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

Reader's Score: 23

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale;

Strengths:

"The Texas Education Agency aims to support districts in preparing students for post-secondary success (e37)." Proposed outcomes include: "(1) increasing the number and percent of students in A or B rated schools, (2) decreasing the number and percent of students in low-performing schools, and (3) creating a cadre of effective district charter authorizers to drive accountability and continuous improvement (e37)."

A logic model is provided which charts "CSP grant objectives and how the replication of high-quality charter schools and the enhanced authorizer capacity lead toward the state's long-term outcomes (e37)." The logic model outlines strategies and activities to support stated program objectives (e37).

Weaknesses:

The stated rationale and the project outcomes are not directly matched with efforts to prepare students for post-secondary success (technical, career readiness programs, early college, etc.). The narrative did not strictly adhere to the grant guidelines, which made it difficult to review. It was unclear how career readiness, early college programs were to be prioritized under the auspices of the grant..

Reader's Score: 9

2. (2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible; and

Strengths:

The applicant states, "the academic and operational excellence of applicant schools will be evaluated using data available through the state's comprehensive systems of evaluation and monitoring. The state's academic accountability rating system enables reviewers to gauge a school's success in terms of attainment of state performance standards, growth of educationally disadvantaged students, and progress toward closing achievement

Sub

gaps among student groups. Additionally, information available through the Charter Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST) will provide a clear picture of the school's history in terms of financial stability and prudence (e47)." The applicant provides evaluative measures from state and regional resources.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not break out specific objective performance measures that are directly related to the intended outcomes of the project and that will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible. Although data sources are referenced, they do not directly relate to the grant, especially sources of data applicable to career readiness, early college. 11 pts

Reader's Score: 9

3. (3) The ambitiousness of the State entity's objectives for the quality charter school program carried out under the CSP State Entities program

Strengths:

The applicant provides detailed background and projected information about the scope of the proposal. The applicant states that, "Over the last five years, the commissioner of education has awarded an average of four new charters annually (e40)." Upon receiving additional funding, "TEA expects to award 10 subgrants to district charter schools in each year of the grant. The investment in technical support for district authorizers and developers implemented in Texas' 2017 ESSA grant has created a strong pool of applicants, which will continue to grow as these supports are continued under this new grant award (41)." Finally, "Texas anticipates awarding a total of 100 subgrants over the five years of the grant (e42)." The state has projected significant growth in supporting each phase of charter school development and implementation. The state entity plans to increase expansion of charter schools from 4 to 10 subgrants annually.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants

1. b. Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants

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

Strengths:

The applicant has incentivized the process, "by increasing the grant award amount to [REDACTED], and by reducing the number of awards for this type of subgrant, TEA is expecting to have a more competitive pool of high-quality charter applicants in future cycles of this grant (e40)". This will ensure that eligible applicants receiving subgrants will meet program objectives.

Regarding district sub grants, "TEA expects to award 10 subgrants to district charter schools in each year of the grant. The investment in technical support for district authorizers and developers implemented in Texas' 2017 ESSA grant has created a strong pool of applicants (e41)."

District charter openings are expanding. "This demand will likely continue to grow as districts take advantage of these new opportunities to expand and replicate using the charter school model to add innovative options that will create high-quality

seats for students (e42).” The applicant is in a highly active phase of charter school (sub-grant) development. Mechanisms are in place to ensure that high-quality seats are added to ensure that grantees will meet objectives and improve educational results for all students.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - State Plan

1. c. State Plan

The State entity's plan to--

Reader's Score: 34

Sub

1. (1) Adequately monitor the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program;

Strengths:

There is evidence that the applicant will monitor eligible applicants receiving subgrants.

“Subgrant recipients are monitored by TEA via the following: (1) TEA’s comprehensive risk-based monitoring system (state and district charters); (2) ongoing standard and CSP-specific monitoring routines; and (3) monitoring reviews conducted in Charter and District Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST) and the Results Driven Accountability (RDA) system (e74).” Additionally, “The commissioner of education has adopted standards that ensure only high-quality charter schools are approved to increase their enrollment, expand their geographic boundaries, or add grade levels or new campuses (e46).

Specifically, the application process will “prioritize funding for new charter schools that pass the rigorous charter application process, as well as the expansion and replication of state and district charter schools with the strongest records of student achievement, as measured by state accountability ratings and other indicators (e46).” It appears that new and existing charters will be evaluated through the “state’s academic accountability rating system enables reviewers to gauge a school’s success in terms of attainment of state performance standards, growth of educationally disadvantaged students, and progress toward closing achievement gaps among student groups (e47).”

The applicants will further be monitored through state compliance, as follows: “The process will be designed to ensure the highest quality district charter schools are chosen for replication by limiting the eligibility for replication to campuses that have received a rating of A or B in the state accountability system (e47).”

Weaknesses:

Although the applicant demonstrated the process for monitoring eligible applicants receiving subgrants, the evaluative measures were not framed in specific terms within the response. Rather, referenced as “adopted standards” and/or “A or B rating (e47).”

Sub

Reader's Score: 9

2. (2) **Work with the authorized public chartering agencies involved to avoid duplication of work for the charter schools and authorized public chartering agencies;**

Strengths:

The applicant demonstrates compliance with authorizers, "The applicant Developers will be required to submit documentation of the practices and procedures by which the school proposed for expansion or replication was authorized. Minimally, an applicant will not be eligible to receive CSP grant funding if any of the required documents are not included with the CSP grant application, or if after the required documents are reviewed, it is determined that the district did not authorize the charter in accordance with state law (e48)."

The application process is clearly delineated among various governing agencies.

"State and district charter schools are subject to systemic monitoring procedures to ensure that schools meet the needs of students served by Federal funding, including students with disabilities and English learners. State charters are subject to additional monitoring through the performance framework and renewal procedures (e61)."

Finally, "At the LEA level, TEA will continue to minimize duplicative data collections required of district authorizers and state charter schools by gathering the information necessary for charter-specific monitoring purposes, to the extent possible, from the standard collections required of all LEAs (e58)".

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (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:

Technical support is a strong component of each stage of grant development as cited throughout the TEA application. At the sub-grantee level, "Sub grantees opening replicated or expanded high school campuses will be supported through the differentiated technical assistance approach that will be carried about by the TEA SSI team. The TEA will provide technical assistance to district charter schools, through the launch of the District Charter Support Network (44)." Further, "Network (its partnership with Educational Service Centers (ESC Region 13) staff routinely provide onsite technical support, training for administrators, teachers, and board members. ESC Region 13 also staffs a resource center that supports operators via phone and email as needed (e58)". Further, "The TEA Division of System Support & Innovation (SSI) provides grant funding and technical assistance (e59)". This assistance is provided through, "the School Redesign Fund (SRF), to school redesign initiatives using state charter policies to catalyze school improvement efforts. This technical assistance is focused on supporting restart and turnaround strategies with either launching, converting, or replicating district-authorized charter schools (e58)."

Efforts to enhance quality authorizing in the state include: "Texas Authorizer Leadership Academy (TALA), the state-branded flagship authorizer support initiative implemented under Texas' 2017 ESSA grant, will continue to offer training via competency-based online modules and an intensive cohort-style academy. TALA will be further developed with support from an external support organization aligned with national authorizer best practices. This organization will review existing materials and provide additional support around dissemination of best practices (e60)".

There is significance evidence of technical assistance and support at every phase of grant development and implementation.

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 10

4. (4) 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; and

Strengths:

The applicant clearly demonstrates input from parents and the community. "As with state charters, district charter applicants for CSP subgrants must provide evidence of both parent and community outreach and support, and how the district's proposed plans match with the needs of the community (e64)."

This initial process for establishing parent and community buy-in builds partnerships at the outset of grant development.

Transparency for members of the community and parents is evident as, "Every applicant for a state charter is interviewed by designees of the commissioner and members of the State Board of Education at a public hearing (e63)."

This procedure requires a team effort and consistency of project design. TEA will build local capacity, as follows: "TALA and the Texas System of Great Schools (SGS) Network initiatives will produce community engagement tools for broad dissemination. SGS Network participants will, moreover, receive intensive support and coaching specific to understanding parent and community demand as well as helping families and communities understand and navigate of school choices (e64)."

There is evidence of transparency to share data (via a dashboard and other resources) for parents and community involvement.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

5. (5) 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:

It is apparent that efforts are embedded in every phase of charter school development to maximize flexibility afforded to charter schools under the law. As a foundational policy, "The model district charter policy that TEA has published encourages districts to maximize the autonomy of local charter operators (e67)."

In terms of governing, "Notably, neither state nor district charter schools are required to comply with statutory requirements relating to school personnel (e65)". This allows schools to have autonomy over their hiring priorities and practices in identifying personnel most prepared to make significant programmatic and operational contributions.

The scope of flexibility is evident as well. "Operationally, state and local charter schools also have ample freedom. Both types of schools are free (within the bounds of their authorizing charter contract) to determine their own school calendars and hours of operation, student/teacher ratios and class sizes, transportation offerings, facility configurations (within local safety and zoning limitations), and geographic service boundaries (e66)."

Additionally, at the administrative level, "the commissioner of education (state authorizer) is given broad waiver authority. A charter school is thus enabled to expand upon the flexibility afforded by statute by requesting that the

Sub

commissioner waive any of the requirements specified in TEC as applicable to charters (e65).”

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. d. Quality of the Management Plan

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

Reader's Score: 11

Sub

- 1. (1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks; and**

Strengths:

The applicant provided a comprehensive management plan with a series of charts to establish milestones, objectives, responsibilities of key personnel, and budget allotments within a time frame (e69-75).

In addition to key personnel, the applicant expands, “ In an effort to maximize staff resources and knowledge sharing, the Division of Charter School Administration (CSA) and Division of System Support and Innovation (SSI) will collaborate to project manage the CSP grants and initiatives” (e68). Regarding allocations, “It should be noted that a no cost extension will be requested in the final year of the grant in order to allow subgrantees awarded in later cycles enough time to adequately implement their charter school programs (e71).”

Weaknesses:

This response would have benefitted from a narrative section to further demonstrate planning as indicated on the charts.

Reader's Score: 8

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

Strengths:

The applicant provides a timeline of management activities and roles of key personnel. “There are seven key personnel, identified below, associated with managing and overseeing the CSP start-up and replication grant. Collectively, the managing team has over 30 years of experience with the Texas CSP grants – including extensive knowledge of CSP compliance nuances and direct experience addressing issues identified in program audits (e68).” The applicant provides a series of charts which provide time frames and milestones for objective performance measures.

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 3

3. (3) **The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.**

Strengths:

No strengths were noted. (This criteria was not specifically addressed for time commitments of key personnel).

Weaknesses:

The criteria was not specifically addressed.

Reader's Score: 0

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 3

1. CPP3 Competitive Preference Priority 3: Equitable Financing

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

Strengths:

The applicant demonstrates that the state entity ensures equitable financing through legislative and policy initiatives applicable to public and charter schools. For example, according to a study provided in the applicant response, "Houston demonstrated the greatest revenue balance between charters and traditional public schools, as charters received 95 percent of the per-pupil funding average of traditional public schools (e19)." The applicant further states that funding in "all Texas public schools, including state charter schools, is generated primarily through the Foundation School Program (FSP) and is based on weighted average daily attendance (WADA), a measure of the number and type of students attending school. WADA reflects average daily attendance (ADA) plus adjustments based on the number of students participating in special education, career and technology education, bilingual/ESL education, state compensatory education, and gifted/talented education programs." This ensures equitable funding. The state further legislates that, "state law "evens out" the funding by supplementing the WADA allocation with an additional amount based on a state-wide average district tax rate and a state-wide average of adjustments districts receive, based on characteristics such as population sparsity and the cost of education in the geography they serve (e20)." In addition to transportation and other operating costs provided on an equal basis, "state law provides that a state charter school "is entitled to funds that are available to school districts from the agency or the commissioner in the form of grants or other discretionary funding (e20).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 4

1. CPP4 Competitive Preference Priority 4: Charter School Facilities

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

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

Strengths:

The state provides support for acquisition and access to public facilities through various legislative initiatives, such as, the New Instructional Facility Allotment (NIFA,) “a reimbursement program that provides up to \$1,000 per student in average daily attendance (ADA) at an eligible new campus in the first year and second years of operation (e23).” Charter schools are able to share in bonds, “under the auspices of the Texas Public Finance Authority (TPFA). The Charter School Finance Corporation (CSFC) serves as a state-supported bond issuer (not precluding the use of other issuers) and provides credit enhancement services to enable charter schools to secure facilities financing at lower costs (e24).” Additionally, “Charter schools authorized by school districts are typically provided a facility under the terms of the performance contract between the district and the school operator (e24).” Texas is proactive in the area of facilities. As noted by, National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS), “Texas is ranked as one of the top ten states in the country for its policy supporting charter school facilities (e23).”

Weaknesses:

“Texas does not provide ongoing facilities funding or low- or no-cost lease entitlements.”

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 5

1. CPP5 Competitive Preference Priority 5: Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools and Local Educational Agencies

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

Strengths:

There is ample evidence of the state using best practices from charter schools to help improve struggling students and LEA's. For example, the Texas Education Association (TEA) provides incentives for partnerships among charter schools and successful charter school management (CMO) organizations. This is legislated through Senate Bill 1882 (SB1882) and specifies three “TEA initiatives: The Effective Schools Framework (ESF), the System of Great Schools Network, and the District-Charter Partnership Initiative (e25). In development of the ESF, the applicant, “conducted best practice research which started with the Transformational Leadership Framework of New Leaders and the bedrock texts of Uncommon Schools’ Paul Bambrick-Santoyo (e25).” In further efforts, “TEA is also supporting more than 15 school districts to plan and eventually execute additional district-charter partnerships (e27).” Legislatively, “a bill was passed that allows traditional districts to be designated as Districts of Innovation. The resulting statute gives struggling LEAs greater local control over the educational and instructional models for students, increased freedom and flexibility, and the empowerment to innovate and think differently (e28).”

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 6**1. CPP6 Competitive Preference Priority 6: Serving At-Risk Students**

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

Strengths:

The state allotment provides for "all public schools, including charter schools, that serve students at risk of dropping out." The applicant provides several examples of how state law "prioritizes the creation of charter schools dedicated to serving at-risk students (e29)." For example, "give priority to applications that propose an open-enrollment charter school campus to be located in the attendance zone of a school district campus assigned an unacceptable performance rating under [TEC] §39.054 for the two preceding school years. The state subgrant application scoring process will allow for the award of priority points for applicants committed to serving students who would otherwise attend a school located in a Qualified Opportunity Zone (e 29-30)." The applicant states that, "NJDOE uses "Closing Gaps" indicators that assess how effectively schools are educating students in identified subgroups (see Appendix F-10, page 5). New Jersey also permits "single-purpose" charter schools that "limit enrollment to a specific population of educationally disadvantaged or traditionally underserved students (e29)."

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 7**1. CPP7 Competitive Preference Priority 7: Best Practices for Charter School Authorizing**

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

Strengths:

The state has received commendations for its use of best practices for charter school authorizing. In fact, "National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) indicates that TEA has implemented all 12 of the NACSA Essential Authorizing Practices in its authorizing of state charter schools (e33)." Further, to ensure best practices are implemented consistently and effectively, "All charter schools are statutorily mandated to undergo annual evaluations for (1) academic performance, via the state accountability system; and (2) financial performance, via the school financial integrity rating system of Texas (FIRST) for districts and the charter school financial integrity rating system of Texas (Charter FIRST) for state charters. Accreditation statuses are issued to school districts and charters at the district (LEA) level based on this academic and financial evaluation (e36)." The state provides a variety of publications, webinars, and training opportunities as resources for charter school authorization "which ensures that all authorizing public chartering agencies will implement best practices" (e34). A strategy used at the district level ensures that "districts that pursue the System of

Great Schools (SGS) strategy design and implement an annual portfolio planning process that evaluates school performance and quality, along with community need and demand, in order to take strategic school actions to improve schools and provide parents with the programs they desire.(e34). This and other effective strategies ensure that best practices for charter school authorizing are implemented.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 4

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/02/2020 10:56 AM

Technical Review Form

Reader: CSP Staff
Applicant: Texas Education Agency (S282A200011)

Total CPP1 and CPP2 Score **2**

CPP1 Score (select the score) **0**

Competitive Preference Priority 1: Spurring Investment in Qualified Opportunity Zones

Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that the area in which the applicant proposes to provide services overlaps with a Qualified Opportunity Zone, as designated by the Secretary of the Treasury under section 1400z-1 of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC). An applicant must--

- a) Provide the census tract number of the Qualified Opportunity Zone(s) in which it proposes to provide services; and**
- b) Describe how the applicant will provide services in the Qualified Opportunity Zone(s).**

Note: In responding to this priority, an applicant is encouraged to explain how it will encourage prospective subgrantees to open, replicate, or expand one or more charter schools in a Qualified Opportunity Zone and how that might align to the application requirement response for (I)(C)(i).

Strengths:

No strengths noted. The applicant makes sub-grantees address Competitive Preference Priority 1 in their applications, so there is no assurance that the Priority will be addressed.

Weaknesses:

- a. The applicant does not list where specific Opportunity Zones are. It does not provide the census tract number of Qualified Opportunity Zones. The applicant says sub-grantees will provide that information in their applications, if applicable. (p. e18)
- b. The applicant does not say how it will provide services. The applicant says it will require sub-grantee applications to include information about how students in Qualified Opportunity Zones will be served. (p.e18)

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority 2: One Authorized Public Chartering Agency Other than a LEA, or an Appeals Process

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 meet a as the state allows a non-profit entity to authorize. (p.e18-19)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2