

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/24/2022 04:34 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Northeast Charter Schools Network, Inc. (S282A220007)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	35	30
Sub Total	35	30
Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants		
Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants		
1. Subgrant Applicants	15	13
Sub Total	15	13
State Plan		
State Plan		
1. State Plan	35	28
Sub Total	35	28
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	15	15
Sub Total	15	15
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. CPP1	1	1
Sub Total	1	1
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. CPP2	2	1
Sub Total	2	1
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
1. CPP3	1	0
Sub Total	1	0
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
1. CPP4	3	2

	Sub Total	3	2
Competitive Preference Priority 5			
Competitive Preference Priority 5			
1. CPP5		3	2
	Sub Total	3	2
	Total	110	92

Technical Review Form

Panel #8 - State Entities Panel - 8: 84.282A

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Northeast Charter Schools Network, Inc. (S282A220007)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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

Reader's Score: 30

Sub

1. The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale; (up to 5 points)

Strengths:

The applicant project components thoroughly address key priorities, including: (1) opening 16 new, expanding, or replicating charter schools in Alliance Districts during the grant period (over 4,000 new student seats) (pg. e14). Alliance Districts are those with the lowest Accountability Index scores and highest concentration of schools identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (pg. e30, e31, e41); (2) providing technical assistance for quality authoring efforts and improved charter operation to subgrantees and Connecticut State Department of Education team members (pgs. e30, e33, e52, e71-e72); (3) sharing charter school best practices with other schools statewide (pgs. e8, e14, e17); and (4) incentivizing the creation of collaborations with traditional public schools or districts with application competitive preference points and additional subgrant funding (pg. e45).

The proposed project includes alignment between project goals, objectives, outcomes, and performance measures in the logic model, based on review of Hartford charter school student performance in 2022 that reaffirmed findings of a study of performance results a decade earlier (pgs. e31 and e32 – e34).

Weaknesses:

The applicant rationale for this application is based on a report of student performance during the 2010 to 2012 school years showing the “gap in scores in Connecticut between white students and students of color, as well as between low-income and non-low-income students, is the largest of any state in the nation.” However, the applicant did not provide any current disaggregated student proficiency data to support that this gap between white students and students of color, as well as between low-income and non-low-income students still exists (pg. e27). Current student performance data is solely disaggregated based on where the student attends school (i.e., charter school, other choice program, or neighborhood school) (pgs. e29 – e31).

Reader's Score: 4

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 (up to 5 points)

Sub

Strengths:

Each proposed project objective is clearly associated with at least one performance measure and relates to the intended outcomes of the project. The performance measures yield quantitative data, which will be used to assess if outcomes are achieved and if the outputs produced by the project are informing practice, or qualitative data, which will monitor if the project was carried out as designed and if the applicant met the needs of the intended audience.

This application was thoroughly discussed with respect to each selection criterion. My scores reflect my professional assessment of the application with respect to those criteria.

Weaknesses:

Some of the applicant's expected outcomes are unclear as to whether all subgrantees will be required to participate. For example, the outcome for objective 1, measure 1.1 (Quality of subgrant competition) is that "85% of RFA respondents agree with the annual survey prompts related to their perception of the competition's quality, transparency, and user friendliness." There is no indication if all subgrantees are required to complete the survey, no indication of the scale for level of agreement (e.g., agree, strongly agree, neutral, etc.) (pgs. e32-e34).

Reader's Score: 4

3. The ambitiousness of the State entity's objectives for the quality charter school program carried out under the CSP State Entities program (up to 5 points)

Strengths:

The applicant's second objective of this application, which is to strengthen the caliber of charter school operation and authorization, is measured by student performance and growth and is ambitious because it requires all educationally disadvantaged student subgroups to outperform district aggregate performance (e33).

Weaknesses:

Some data and explanation for the applicant's objectives are provided, but the objectives of the project are not attainable and/or not ambitious. For example, the applicants' third objective of this application, which is to heighten collaboration and resource sharing between and among schools with different governance structures, relies on subgrantees choosing to select to apply for the subgrant incentive funds rather than as a requirement of subgrantee status (pg. e35, e41, and e45). The decision to make collaboration a choice inspires limited confidence this objective will be met.

Another example is the applicant's first objective of this application, which is to increase the number of high-quality public school seats for educationally disadvantaged students. Evidence to support this objective included a waitlist count of 6,288 students in 2020-2021 (pg. e36). Opening 16 new, replicated, and expanded charter schools with more than 4,000 seats during the grant period would represent an approximate 37% increase in charter school student enrollment (pg. e7, e14, e17, e33, and e34). This objective is not ambitious and easily attainable.

Multiple short-term and medium-term outcomes in the applicant logic model are not clearly measured. For example, one short-term outcome is "Increased interest among high-quality operators to consider opening new seats in urban communities" but there is no measure proposed that looks at 'interest'.

Reader's Score: 3

4. The extent to which the number of subgrant awards anticipated for each grant project year is supported by evidence of demand and need, and the proposed average subgrant award amount is supported by evidence of the need of applicants (up to 20 points)

Sub

Strengths:

The applicant provided convincing evidence of waitlist numbers for charter schools during the 2020-2021 school year (i.e., 6,288) to support its need for additional charter school seats during the grant period as described by the applicant (pg. e36). In addition, the 16 subgrant awards to new, expanding, and replicating charter schools throughout the 5-year grant period is significant given the current 21 charter schools currently in operation.

Weaknesses:

It is not clear how the base award was calculated other than it “takes into account the increased financial demands on schools serving significant concentrations of educationally disadvantaged students” (pg. e41).

Reader's Score: 19

Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants - Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants

1. The likelihood that the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the program will meet the State entity’s objectives and improve educational results for students.

Strengths:

The applicant outlined a detailed subgrant application process including best practices such as using a peer review process and capacity interviews (pg. e42). Communication specifying the availability, requirements, and process of subgrants to eligible applicants includes being posted on multiple websites (i.e., CTCSA, CSDE), social media platforms, distributed via email to the CTCSA Connecticut distribution list, and posted in the National charter School Resource Center’s Funding Opportunity Digest (pgs. e42 – e43).

Replicating and expanding applicants are required to affirm they have not had any significant findings or incidents of organizational non-compliance over the past three years, do not have any active corrective action plans for identified reasons, and are not identified for targeted support and improvement under any state’s ESSA plan, which should support the likelihood that subgrantees will meet the applicant’s first and second objectives (pgs. e,31 and e43).

The applicant provided a comprehensive description of subgrant application requirements (pgs. e44 – e48). Included in these requirements is how the subgrantee will address transportation needs for students (pg. e44).

Weaknesses:

It is not clear how the applicant intends to support diverse charter models, including models that serve rural communities as well as prioritizing the opening of high schools as there was no mention of either prioritizing or supporting the opening of high schools or charter schools in rural communities. Also, subgrantees are not required to meet collaboration requirements unless they choose to apply for competitive preference points (pg. e35, e41, and e45). Although the components of the subgrant application are mentioned by the applicant, it is still unclear how successful the subgrant application process will be in supporting the increase of high-quality charter school options that will improve educational results for children especially given there was an unexplained hiatus of charter school applications between 2017 and 2022 (pg. e38).

Reader's Score: 13

State Plan - State Plan

1. The State entity’s plan to--

Reader's Score: 28

Sub

1. Adequately monitor the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program; (up to 10 points)

Strengths:

The applicant presents a comprehensive monitoring plan that addresses in detail how the applicant will monitor subgrantees regularly, including desk reviews quarterly in year 1 and semiannually in subsequent years, site visits annually in year 1 and determined by risk assessment status in subsequent years, board meeting attendance semiannually in year 1 and at least annually in subsequent years, and via the Annual Performance Report and Annual Financial Report (pgs. e53 – e56 and e70 – e71).

Using the above schedule, any risk will be identified within approximately 90 days and addressed with subgrantees via fedreporting.com and routine check-in-calls (pg. e56). Corrective action plans, if appropriate, will be assigned and monitored via fedreporting.com.

The applicant provided statements indicating these future activities would be part of the project: (1) members of the Peer Review Working Group will be thoroughly trained (pgs. e49 – e50) and (2) subgrant application review will include programmatic sustainability once CSP funds have been exhausted (pg. e50).

Weaknesses:

The applicant included a monitoring plan with a description of most of the activities and systems the applicant and subgrantees will use to ensure effective monitoring (pgs. e51 – e57). However, the description lacked detail on who will create the monitoring rubric, the scoring categories for the rubric (e.g., numeric, level of development, etc.), and how it will be tailored to ensure that subgrantees will use grant funds to meet the educational needs of students with a disability and English learners (pgs. e55 – e56).

Reader's Score: 9

2. Work with the authorized public chartering agencies involved to avoid duplication of work for the charter schools and authorized public chartering agencies; (up to 5 points)

Strengths:

The applicant proposes to work collaboratively throughout the project period to avoid the duplication of work for both charter school operators and the authorizer by meeting quarterly with the Connecticut State Department of Education to synchronize timelines, identify potential synergies, and mitigate duplicative burdens on subgrantees (pg. e57). This includes identifying areas of overlap between the state's existing application and reporting requirements and the CSP reporting requirements, as well as sharing monitoring reports via the online grant management system (pg. e57). The plan demonstrates multiple methods of the applicant sharing information with the authorizer.

Weaknesses:

It is not clear if the applicant efforts will lead to a significant reduction in burden for both operators and authorizer as there was no mention of the sharing of information from the Connecticut State Department of Education to the applicant (pgs. e57, e114).

Reader's Score: 4

Sub

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; (up to 10 points)**

Strengths:

- i. The applicant presents a reasonable plan to provide technical assistance and support for subgrantees and state authorizing staff following the National Charter School Resource Center's best practices (pgs. e58 – e62). Topics included in technical assistance are broad and cover pre-award workshops; compliance support for all award recipients; leadership development; governance training; organizational and policy capacity; human capacity; student recruitment, enrollment, and retention that promotes the inclusion of all students; reducing the overuse of discipline practices that remove students from the classroom; and topics expressly tailored to the needs as subgrantees as identified during the application process and in the course of subsequent monitoring activities (pgs. e58 – e62).
- ii. The proposed Quality Authorizing TA Team will conduct a comprehensive needs assessment in year 1 to assess the state of current authorizing practices in Connecticut and provide quarterly trainings in mutually agreed-upon areas highlighted within (pgs. e61 – e62).

This application was thoroughly discussed with respect to each selection criterion. My scores reflect my professional assessment of the application with respect to those criteria.

Weaknesses:

The applicant presented a reasonable plan for providing technical assistance to subgrantees, but the applicant does not appear to require nor measure subgrantee attendance or participation in technical assistance (pgs. e58 – e62 and e71 – e72).

The applicant provided a list of areas that will be assessed in the needs assessment and indicated that technical assistance will be provided based on the results, but topics, activities, and modalities to deliver assistance is not explored in detail (pgs. e62 – e62). Holding charter schools accountable to their performance agreement is not mentioned as an area that will be assessed or supported through technical assistance. In addition, it is not clear which state authorizing staff will attend Quality Authorizing TA Team trainings or how Connecticut State Department of Education team members will be selected to receive support during each year of the project period (pg. e62).

Reader's Score: 8

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 (up to 5 points)

Strengths:

The applicant proposes to create a CSP Parent Steering Committee composed of two parent representatives from each subgrantee (pg. e63). This Committee will convene quarterly and participate in two-way communication between parents and Great Schools for Connecticut staff specific to the project, federal programs, and state policy, advocacy, and operational landscape (pgs. e63 – e64). In addition, charter school boards of trustees must include at least one parent representative pr state statute (pgs. e62, e207, e301).

Weaknesses:

The only parent input this project solicits regarding the implementation and operation of charter schools in the state are from parents of students attending subgrantee schools, which is limiting. The applicant does not describe how it will collect data and share it with subgrantees and state authorizer staff or how the subgrantees or state authorizer

Sub

staff may use the information when implementing or operating a charter school.

Reader's Score: 3

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. (up to 5 points)

Strengths:

The applicant clearly demonstrates the flexibility offered by Connecticut's state charter school law, including: flexibilities in educational program, instructional methodology, school services; the option to waive lottery requirements if school focus is to serve at-risk students; flexible staffing; exclusion from collective bargaining requirements; and ability to request a waiver for other permissible statutes and regulations within the Board of Education's authority (pgs. e64 – e65).

Weaknesses:

The applicant proposes to have subgrantees explain how they intend to leverage their statutory autonomies (pg. e65 – e66) but did not address how it will continue to work to help subgrantees find ways to maximize the flexibilities allowed.

Reader's Score: 4

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. 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: 15

Sub

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 (up to 10 points)

Strengths:

The applicant presented a management plan with a clear timeline and milestones that are realistic and appropriate for the three objectives of the grant (pgs. e66 – e72). The proposed budget aligns with the management of the grant and provides adequate resources for all project tasks (pgs. e378 – e395, e405, e407). The responsibilities and milestones are adequate to ensure project success (pgs. e68 – e72). All key project personnel have demonstrated qualifications to contribute to the project's success (pgs. e83 – e110).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

2. The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project (up to 3 points)

Sub

Strengths:

The applicant provides a detailed plan on how it will design and distribute multiple surveys to collect qualitative feedback, and the review of student performance data to collect quantitative feedback, to make improvements to the project. The plan includes a comprehensive list of who will participate in surveys, including parents, school leadership, technical assistance attendees and recipients, etc. The quantitative and qualitative feedback will be used to inform both technical assistance offerings and continuous improvement efforts of Great Schools in Connecticut program (pgs. e32 – e34 and e63 – e64).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 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:

The applicant details the specific percentage of time the key personnel will participate in the program, including the project executive, project director, and project manager (pgs. e66 and e74). The time dedicated appears appropriate and adequate to meet the goals and objectives of the grant.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Competitive Preference Priority 1

- 1. At Least One Authorized Public Chartering Agency Other than a Local Educational Agency, or an Appeals Process.
(0 to 1 points)**

To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that it is located in a State that--

- (a) Allows at least one entity that is not a local educational agency (LEA) to be an authorized public chartering agency for developers seeking to open a charter school in the State; or**
(b) In the case of a State in which LEAs are the only authorized public chartering agencies, the State has an appeals process for the denial of an application for a charter school.

Strengths:

The applicant indicated Connecticut has a state authorizing body, the Connecticut State Board of Education, which meets (a) of this priority (pgs. e19 – e20).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Competitive Preference Priority 2

- 1. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that 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. (up to 2 points)**

Strengths:

State law provides progressively more equitable financing for charter schools relative to traditional public schools (pg. e20).

Weaknesses:

Despite seeing improvement in charter school funding, the applicant admits that in practice charter schools are “woefully under-resourced relative to their district counterparts” (pgs. e20, e22, e39). Some proposed uses of grant funds appear to supplant state, local, or charter school funds with these federal funds. For example, the applicant proposes to reduce the burden of work for the Connecticut State Department of Education by using grant funds to train new team members in national best practices (pg. e58). Another example is the applicant supports this grant as a financial necessity of charter schools because of the “deliberate phase-in of eligibility for supplemental funding” for charter schools serving a disproportionate number of low-income students and students of color, leaving charter schools are hamstrung by resource shortages for multiple years (pg. e40). A third example is the applicant supports this grant as a financial necessity of charter schools because “the statutory bonding program under which charters are eligible for up to \$ [REDACTED] has been deprioritized under recent gubernatorial administrations, effectively foreclosing access to that dedicated facilities funding stream...” (pg. e40).

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Competitive Preference Priority 3

- 1. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that the State in which it is located uses best practices from charter schools to help improve struggling schools and LEAs. (up to 1 points)**

Strengths:

The applicant indicated state law requires the Connecticut State Department of Education to publish annual reports synthesizing the best practices reported by schools in their annual reports and to distribute a copy of the report to each public school superintendent (pg. e21).

This application was thoroughly discussed with respect to each competitive priority. My scores reflect my professional assessment of the application with respect to those priorities.

Weaknesses:

It is not clear how many charter school best practices are included in the abovementioned annual report. In addition, there was no information provided supporting the state’s use of any charter school best practices to improve struggling schools.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority 4 - Competitive Preference Priority 4

1. To be eligible 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: (up to 3 points)

- 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
- f) Low- or no-cost leasing privileges.

Strengths:

The applicant adequately describes a grant program established in 2001 to assist state charter schools in financing school building projects, general improvements to school buildings, and repayment of debt incurred for school building projects (pg. e22). State law incentivized districts to enter into agreements with high-performing charter schools that include support such as the use of a district facility (pg. e22). The state has a bonding program under which charter schools are eligible for up to \$ [REDACTED] (pg. e40).

Weaknesses:

The statutory bonding program under which charter schools are eligible for up to \$ [REDACTED] has been deprioritized under recent gubernatorial administrations, effectively foreclosing access that dedicated facilities funding stream for all charter schools (new and operating) (pg. e40).

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority 5 - Competitive Preference Priority 5

1. To be eligible 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. (up to 3 points)

Strengths:

The applicant documented the enrollment of educationally disadvantaged students in charter schools at a disproportionately high rate, including low-income students and students who are Black or Hispanic (pg. e23) and described how state policy incentivizes charter schools to enroll and support at-risk students (pg. e24).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address many specific activities provided by charter schools to support at-risk students (pgs. e23 – e26).

Reader's Score: 2

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Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Northeast Charter Schools Network, Inc. (S282A220007)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	35	33
Sub Total	35	33
Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants		
Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants		
1. Subgrant Applicants	15	13
Sub Total	15	13
State Plan		
State Plan		
1. State Plan	35	33
Sub Total	35	33
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	15	15
Sub Total	15	15
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. CPP1	1	1
Sub Total	1	1
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. CPP2	2	2
Sub Total	2	2
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
1. CPP3	1	1
Sub Total	1	1
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
1. CPP4	3	2

	Sub Total	3	2
Competitive Preference Priority 5			
Competitive Preference Priority 5			
1. CPP5		3	1
	Sub Total	3	1
	Total	110	101

Technical Review Form

Panel #8 - State Entities Panel - 8: 84.282A

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Northeast Charter Schools Network, Inc. (S282A220007)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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

Reader's Score: 33

Sub

1. The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale; (up to 5 points)

Strengths:

The applicant provided a strong rationale by stating that in 2022, the students attending public charter schools outperformed students attending other neighborhood schools (e29) in English language arts and math. For example, among public charter schools whose students took the 2021 SBAC assessments in person, 85% outperformed their surrounding district in English language arts, and 77% did the same in math. The applicant also stated that there is a large achievement gap between students of color and white students and between low-income students and non-low-income students, but public charter schools did the best job at closing the gap both at the Proficient level and at the Goal level in Math and Reading at the middle school level. Furthermore, the applicant reported that urban students in public charter schools benefitted more than urban students in the other Choice programs. The applicant supported the project design with a clear logic model that is supported by research, including Hartford Courant (2022) (e29).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 5

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 (up to 5 points)

Strengths:

The evaluation methods are appropriately related to the three objectives and the overall outcomes of the project as listed on the logic model. The evaluation will include the use of both quantitative and qualitative data-collection methods. Surveys, focus groups, and interviews will be used to collect quantitative and qualitative data (e33). Enrollment data, SBAC data, attendance logs, etc. will also be reviewed to assess the fulfillment of the outcomes (e34). For example, the attendance records of the quarterly Parent Steering Committee will be used as data to determine parent engagement, which is expected to be a 90% average rate of attendance.

This application was thoroughly discussed with respect to each selection criterion. My scores reflect my professional assessment of the application with respect to those criteria.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 5

3. The ambitiousness of the State entity's objectives for the quality charter school program carried out under the CSP State Entities program (up to 5 points)

Strengths:

The applicant provided an ambitious and attainable objective, Objective #1, to increase the number of high-quality public school seats for educationally disadvantaged students in Connecticut. The increase includes adding 4,000 high-quality seats, which the applicant states will represent a 37% increase over the 2020–21 charter school sector-wide enrollment of 10,940 (e34).

Weaknesses:

Although there are performance measures listed under both objectives 2 and 3, the fulfillment of these objectives are not measurable. For example, it is not clear how the applicant plans to measure how they will have strengthened the caliber of charter school operation and authorization in Connecticut, nor how to measure the fulfillment of the objective to heighten collaboration and resource sharing between and among schools with different governance structures, particularly when baseline data was not provided.

Reader's Score: 3

4. The extent to which the number of subgrant awards anticipated for each grant project year is supported by evidence of demand and need, and the proposed average subgrant award amount is supported by evidence of the need of applicants (up to 20 points)

Strengths:

The applicant provided convincing evidence to support the demand and need for charter schools that need financial resources. For example, there is a plan to award 16 subgrants during the grant period, and this includes 10 new subgrantees and 6 replication/expansion subgrantees to address the charter school waitlist of 6,288 students (e381). Subgrants will be given as follows: three in year 1, four in year 2, and three in years 3, 4, and 5. The applicant plans to distribute \$ [REDACTED] with a maximum of \$ [REDACTED] allocated during the first year of the subgrant term and up to another \$ [REDACTED] available in the subgrant's second year (e381).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 20

Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants - Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants

1. The likelihood that the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the program will meet the State entity's objectives and improve educational results for students.

Strengths:

The applicant adequately stated that Connecticut policy incentivizes charter schools to enroll and support at-risk students, which demonstrates one of the state's entity's objectives, specifically to support and serve disadvantaged students (e24). Connecticut charter schools are eligible to receive supplemental funding for serving students in high-risk demographic categories, and Connecticut state law requires charter school authorizers to give preference to new school applicants whose primary purpose is to provide programs designed to serve at-risk populations, including students with a history of low academic performance. Based on this law, it is highly likely that the subgrantees selected will meet the state's objectives related to at-risk students. Other strategies to ensure quality applicants will meet the state's objectives include having an application process with an eligibility review via a Letter of Intent and an RFA response (e43). The applicants will also have a capacity interview that will require them to provide a detailed description of their organizational structure, qualifications of their leadership team and the governing body, and a plan for the development of the capacity of trustees, administrators, and educators (e47).

Weaknesses:

More information about improving students' educational results is needed. The applicant did not state how they plan to gauge how applicants will demonstrate they can improve the academic performance of the student populations that they plan to serve.

Reader's Score: 13

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

Reader's Score: 33

Sub**1. Adequately monitor the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program; (up to 10 points)****Strengths:**

The applicant provided a detailed and thorough timeline of the planned subgrantee's monitoring activities. The GSCT Project Team will hire and partner with a quality, experienced service provider that will be selected through a competitive process (e53). Subgrantees will participate in programmatic and fiscal monitoring throughout the grant period. The programmatic monitoring process will include a review of enrollment and attendance data, student performance, school culture data, and staff and student attrition data as well as documentation related to the fulfillment of the subgrant objectives and adherence to state and federal requirements. The fiscal monitoring process will consist of reviews of each subgrant's expenditures, inventory lists, contracts, financial statements, audit reports, and board policies (e54). The applicant also provided a comprehensive monitoring rubric and a corrective action plan, which demonstrates that they are willing to help subgrantees make improvements.

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 10

2. Work with the authorized public chartering agencies involved to avoid duplication of work for the charter schools and authorized public chartering agencies; (up to 5 points)

Strengths:

The applicant provided a sound plan for reducing duplication of efforts for the charter schools and the authorizer. The Connecticut Charter Schools Association will work with representatives from Connecticut State Department of Education in order to coordinate their timelines, identify potential synergies, and avoid duplication of work for subgrantees on a quarterly basis (e57). There will also be robust data-sharing per a memorandum of understanding with the CSDE (e58).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 5

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; (up to 10 points)**

Strengths:

(i). The Connecticut Charter Schools Association has a strong plan for providing technical assistance to the subgrant applicants via pre-award workshops and webinars (e59). The Association will also offer ongoing compliance support to all grant award recipients as well as develop and disseminate grants management tools and resources. Subgrantees who struggle with programmatic, financial, or grant-specific issues will be offered increased support via topic-based technical assistance in those risk areas. Required areas for technical assistance will include recruiting and retaining students, particularly those with disabilities and English learners (e60) and reducing exclusionary discipline (e59). This is a comprehensive package of technical assistance services for subgrantees.

(ii). The applicant has a sound plan to provide technical assistance to authorizers. In order to gauge the needs of authorizers, a needs assessment of authorizing practices in Connecticut will be utilized. The QAT will use the results of the needs assessment to provide quarterly trainings and share tools, materials, and policies (e61). Other types of technical assistance will be provided in the forms of coaching and in-person site visits (e62).

This application was thoroughly discussed with respect to each selection criterion. My scores reflect my professional assessment of the application with respect to those criteria.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

- 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 (up to 5 points)**

Strengths:

The applicant provided a strong plan to ensure parents’ input is included in the implementation and operation of the charter schools to be funded. Per the Connecticut statutes, Charter school boards of trustees must include at least one parent representative, so this ensures some parental input. Inclusive parent initiatives include 1:1 meetings, regional parent leader meetings, and workshop-based advocacy and organizing trainings (e63). The applicant also noted that there will be a Parent Steering Committee and a parent survey to gauge parents’ interest, ideas, and satisfaction.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not provide a description of how the feedback from parents will be utilized. More information about the value and use of parents’ feedback would have strengthened the application.

Reader's Score: 4

- 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. (up to 5 points)**

Strengths:

The state of Connecticut adequately provides flexibility under charter school law. Charter schools are given the autonomy to design their own individual educational programs, instructional methodologies, and services (e64).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not state how they will help the subgrantees to actually operationalize the flexibility they provide. Strategies for ensuring subgrantees understand the degrees of autonomy that is offered would have strengthened the application.

Reader's Score: 4

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

- 1. 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: 15

Sub

- 1. The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project**

Sub

on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks (up to 10 points)

Strengths:

The applicant provided a detailed management plan that describes the key staff who will implement and coordinate the project. The proposed leadership, which includes the Project Executive, Project Director, and Project Manager, have sufficient years of relevant administrative and educational experience and community involvement. A CSP Project Specialist is another essential member of the Project Team who will devote 100% effort the project. There is a detailed timeline of major activities and milestones through 2027. The tasks include hiring staff, creating and disseminating the subgrant RFA, providing technical assistance to applicants and subgrantees, and engaging parents in various aspects of the project (e68-70).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 10

2. The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project (up to 3 points)

Strengths:

The applicant provided a strong plan for providing feedback and continuous improvement during the grant period. The formative evaluation process will result in data that will be used to make program adjustments/updates. They provided a thorough rubric that describes the monitoring processes that includes giving feedback as well (e55).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 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:

The applicant provided a comprehensive description of the time commitments of key personnel. The Project Specialist will commit 100% effort to carrying out the activities of the grant (50% TA and 50% admin). The Project Director will dedicate 51% effort to the project (75% TA and 25% admin). And other key personnel will include a 36% time commitment from the Project Manager and a 14% time commitment from the Project Executive (e74). The amount of effort proposed is sufficient to manage the project and meet the objectives.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Sub

Reader's Score: 2

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. **At Least One Authorized Public Chartering Agency Other than a Local Educational Agency, or an Appeals Process.**
(0 to 1 points)

To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that it is located in a State that--

(a) Allows at least one entity that is not a local educational agency (LEA) to be an authorized public chartering agency for developers seeking to open a charter school in the State; or

(b) In the case of a State in which LEAs are the only authorized public chartering agencies, the State has an appeals process for the denial of an application for a charter school.

Strengths:

The Connecticut State Board of Education serves as the state's principal authorizing entity (e19) meeting criteria (a) of the priority. This CPP has been fully met.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. **To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that 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. (up to 2 points)**

Strengths:

The applicant clearly stated that the charter school per-pupil tuition rate has been increased by \$ [REDACTED] which makes it equivalent to the foundation funding level for traditional public schools (e20). Also, state charter schools in Connecticut were given access to a weighted per-pupil funding formula that will be based on student need similar to traditional public schools. Based on these two examples, this CPP has been fully met.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Competitive Preference Priority 3

1. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that the State in which it is located uses best practices from charter schools to help improve struggling schools and LEAs. (up to 1 points)

Strengths:

The applicant stated that they require charter schools to share their student learning practices and experiences with the local or regional board of education in the town in which the proposed charter school is to be located. The Connecticut state law also requires the CSDE to publish an annual report that synthesizes the best practices of the schools in their annual reports and to disseminate a copy to each public school superintendent. The best practices published included charter schools adopting innovative approaches to hybrid learning and tailoring recruitment efforts to target students with disabilities and non-native English speaking families (e20).

This application was thoroughly discussed with respect to each competitive priority. My scores reflect my professional assessment of the application with respect to those priorities.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 4 - Competitive Preference Priority 4

1. To be eligible 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: (up to 3 points)

- 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
- f) Low- or no-cost leasing privileges.

Strengths:

The applicant provided an adequate response that in 2001, and again in 2010, Connecticut enacted legislation that empowered the Commissioner to establish a grant program that will assist state charter schools with funding for facilities with three initiatives: school building projects, general improvements to school buildings, and repayment of debt incurred for school building projects (22).

Weaknesses:

Although there is a statute to have funding for facilities, there is no guarantee that this funding has been or will be distributed. The application would have been strengthened by providing a more definite policy that ensures funding will be given.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority 5 - Competitive Preference Priority 5

- 1. To be eligible 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. (up to 3 points)**

Strengths:

The applicant provided some examples of activities that charter schools have utilized to assist at-risk students, including the RULER program, which teaches skills in emotional intelligence and EI Sistema, which is a music and arts education program (e25).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not discuss enough specific activities that will support at-risk students. There was no discussion of activities like dropout prevention, career counseling, etc.

Reader's Score: 1

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/24/2022 04:41 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/25/2022 10:43 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Northeast Charter Schools Network, Inc. (S282A220007)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	35	27
Sub Total	35	27
Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants		
Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants		
1. Subgrant Applicants	15	10
Sub Total	15	10
State Plan		
State Plan		
1. State Plan	35	28
Sub Total	35	28
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	15	15
Sub Total	15	15
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. CPP1	1	1
Sub Total	1	1
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. CPP2	2	1
Sub Total	2	1
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
1. CPP3	1	0
Sub Total	1	0
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
1. CPP4	3	1

	Sub Total	3	1
Competitive Preference Priority 5			
Competitive Preference Priority 5			
1. CPP5		3	3
	Sub Total	3	3
	Total	110	86

Technical Review Form

Panel #8 - State Entities Panel - 8: 84.282A

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Northeast Charter Schools Network, Inc. (S282A220007)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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

Reader's Score: 27

Sub

1. The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale; (up to 5 points)

Strengths:

The application includes a well-designed logic model aligned with the project goals. The goals, particularly the expansion of high-quality seats (16 schools and 4,000 seats), are supported by internal and external research e/31. The logic model calls for strengthening the statewide system by supporting authorizers and subgrantees. The application focuses on creating high-quality seats at newly developed or converted charter schools. e/31. The rationale is based on research. A State task force on the achievement gap is cited as a rationale for the project's focus. The resulting Master Plan stated that choice programs in general and charter schools, in particular, helped reduce the gap e/27. In addition, a rigorous evaluation of choice programs demonstrated that middle school students served at charter schools demonstrated significant gains e/27. The research-based data demonstrate that charter schools in Connecticut exceed traditional schools in improving achievement outcomes e/28. As a follow-up, the Hartford Courant studied state assessment performance and confirmed students at charter exceeded those at traditional schools in reading and math scores and gains e/29.

Weaknesses:

Overall, the qualitative and quantitative outcomes of the logic model (and those subsequently presented) are weakly tied to the objectives e/32. Despite mentioning funding reform and facilities support, the logic model does not include methods for addressing these issues e/30. In addition, the connection between the logic model activities and the goals does not clearly explain how the grant funds will be used to strengthen a cohesive statewide system e/31. There are no outcomes that indicate that best practices from charter schools would be implemented in failing schools, e/31. While the proposed plan incentivizes collaboration and dissemination of practices, there is no indication of whether the practices adopted by traditional schools were successful e/32.

Reader's Score: 4

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 (up to 5 points)

Strengths:

The applicant provides a thorough list of measures, sources, and outcomes e/33. Among these outcomes, the applicant includes performance measures that require outperforming averages in the district e/33. The goals and

Sub

outcomes provided are connected to the objectives and have measurable outcomes, both qualitative and quantitative.

Weaknesses:

The outcomes and objectives, however, are loosely tied to proving the applicant successfully met the goal. For example, the two training sessions described do not align with the extensive professional development described in the logic model e/33. The applicant describes identifying areas of heightened risk for subgrantees but then does not demonstrate how this risk will be calculated e/33. The monitoring process described does not demonstrate in any depth how participants are meeting the goals of the subgrants. An example is the use of the response rate on the annual survey to indicate parent engagement e/34 This application was thoroughly discussed with respect to each selection criterion. My scores reflect my professional assessment of the application with respect to those criteria

Reader's Score: 3

3. The ambitiousness of the State entity's objectives for the quality charter school program carried out under the CSP State Entities program (up to 5 points)

Strengths:

The applicant does describe ambitious goals in the areas of charter school growth. e/34. In addition to a focus on strengthening the state network and providing more seats for students, the applicant also offers objectives linked to student performance measures designed to increase reading and math proficiency for disadvantaged students e/35

Weaknesses:

Although the objectives are clearly tied to the project, they do not seem ambitious enough to meet the overall goals of the project. It is clear there is a need for the program, but the evidence chosen to demonstrate success in meeting that need is not overly ambitious. e/34. Many of the outcomes that are meant to demonstrate success in meeting project objectives are narrow and unambitious e/34. The applicant includes a wide range of participants but fails to describe how their activities will strengthen the system or facilitate the sharing of resources e/35. The applicant appears to view charter schools as an intervention. Instead of describing ways to increase opportunities for innovative models to become successful programs, this application is mired in meeting percentages and considers "showing up" as evidence of improvement. e/35

Reader's Score: 2

4. The extent to which the number of subgrant awards anticipated for each grant project year is supported by evidence of demand and need, and the proposed average subgrant award amount is supported by evidence of the need of applicants (up to 20 points)

Strengths:

The applicants have demonstrated that there is a need for the project. The number of new seats created by this program meets the documented need as evidenced by wait lists e/37. The application includes letters of support from a wide range of community members e/37 The application includes a table of subgrant recipients by year and by award type e/37. The proposal's description of the investments by the philanthropic community is evidence of demand e/38. Finally, letters of intent from 10 potential subgrant applicants are included e/38.

Weaknesses:

While the applicant presents an argument based on need for more seats and subgrantees, the facts supporting and the activities mitigating the needs are not particularly strong. One recurring theme is the lack of investment in charter schools by the state as a rationale for the grants e/40. To begin with, the applicant's description of the purpose of the grant appears to indicate it is a supplement to meet baseline funding rather than the implementation

Sub

of a program to share innovative practices e/40. And, the two greatest needs, funding and facilities, are major barriers that are unaddressed in this proposal. e/40. Descriptions of the funding and facility challenges that appear to be growing may make it difficult for the project to reach its objectives e/40. The description of the "financial playing field" in this section questions the sustainability of the program after funding is ended e/40. Also, the escalators suggested, a threshold of enrollment of educationally disadvantaged students as well as funding for newly created partnerships do not seem to address quality e/41. Finally, earlier grant cycles have demonstrated limited interest e/39.

Reader's Score: 18

Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants - Quality of Eligible Subgrant Applicants

1. The likelihood that the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the program will meet the State entity's objectives and improve educational results for students.

Strengths:

The application describes a process that will assist in meeting objectives and improving educational results. The application provides a step-by-step process of its award cycle and steps e/42. The proposal includes multiple avenues of publicizing the subgrants e/42. The application requires information that will allow the review team to determine if the proposed organization will be viable, including roles, responsibilities, and qualifications of key personnel e/47.

Weaknesses:

The process for selecting and monitoring subgrantees does not guarantee their success. To begin with, although a technical review is included in the process, the applicant does not suggest the process for determining technical eligibility to receive a grant e/43. The proposed design of the subgrant application seems subjective. There does not seem to be research- or evidenced-based reason provided e/46. There is no description of how the rubrics will be designed e/51. It is difficult to understand how the Request for Applications (RFA) sections were designed, why certain data are required, and what is the threshold for meeting the RFA is. For some of the priorities, the amount of information requested seems onerous e/45. It is unclear the rationale for the supporting documentation or why certain data were requested or what responses are being sought e/48. Also, the details provided about the applicant interview are insufficient to indicate whether the information gathered will be meaningful in predicting the success of the program e/49. The description of the review team is vague. The description provided does not indicate a basis for these member positions or whether this represents best practices e/49. The relationship between the state approval process (authorizer) and review of subgrant application are related. For example, it is not clear what would happen in the case where an educational model is approved for a new or expanding charter school, but the grant committee does not share their enthusiasm. It sounds like a duplicative review e/45. The proposal does not include a recruitment pool or strategy for the Peer Review Working Group (PRWG) e/50. It is interesting to note that the group composition does not include an educator specifically e/49. The details provided about the applicant interview are insufficient to indicate whether the information gathered will be meaningful in predicting the success of the program e/49.

Reader's Score: 10

State Plan - State Plan

1. The State entity's plan to--

Reader's Score: 28

Sub

1. Adequately monitor the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program; (up to 10 points)

Strengths:

The applicant provides a monitoring timeline that indicates regular review and data collection on progress e/52. The monitoring rubric is broken into four domains with a series of indicators that cover all operational and management activities e/54. The Monitoring plan includes categorizing by risk e/62. A process is included for peer review of findings and identification of higher risk grantees e/52. Peer reviewers will assess the quality of the program from the application phase to desk reviews and site visit rubrics e/52. The monitoring includes attending Board meetings to observe governance e/53.

Weaknesses:

The applicant fails to describe how the monitoring tool was designed, whether it is a research-based document, and who will review the monitoring reports e/56. It is unclear whether there are any state employees involved in the monitoring process. e/53 nor are sufficient details described regarding the subcontracting of the monitoring activities that would indicate they are sufficient e/53. It is unclear how the APR and the AFR will be designed and how this process will be implemented e/55. The application fails to describe how the site visit process will be designed, who will attend the site visit, and who will be responsible for scoring the results of the visit e/54. While a process for determining risk factors for subgrantees is provided, there is no detailed description of the intervention and improvement process, levels of reprimand, or specific penalties being levied. A specific description of conditions for termination is not provided e/56. It is difficult to assess whether the continuum of corrective actions is aligned with any state responses e/54.

Reader's Score: 8

2. Work with the authorized public chartering agencies involved to avoid duplication of work for the charter schools and authorized public chartering agencies; (up to 5 points)

Strengths:

The application describes interdepartmental cooperation to streamline information requests and submissions e/57. The application includes program objectives specifically dedicated to reducing duplicated efforts e/57. The proposal includes a plan for reducing duplication of effort that includes interdepartmental cooperation at the CSDE and a sharing of data requested from grantees e/57.

Weaknesses:

A list of data points that could be shared among agencies is not provided e/58.

Reader's Score: 4

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; (up to 10 points)**

Strengths:

The applicant provides a research-based approach to technical assistance by creating an authorizing team led by a national expert e/61. The project employs a best practices approach to technical assistance for subgrantees and their schools. e/56.

Sub

Weaknesses:

Though the applicant provides technical assistance, there is no clear method for identifying what technical assistance a program needs and whether they are required to accept it e/59. The applicant does not provide a model for governance training nor what the objectives of the training would be e/60.

Reader's Score: 9

- 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 (up to 5 points)**

Strengths:

State law requires that each charter school board have one parent as a member e/61. The applicant provides advocacy training for parents e/63.

Weaknesses:

The application describes training opportunities and input vehicles but does not directly describe how the feedback will be incorporated into project implementation There is a disconnect between the collection of parent feedback and what happens to that feedback in terms of grantees e/64.

Reader's Score: 3

- 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. (up to 5 points)**

Strengths:

The application provides examples of flexibility provided under the state’s charter law, including curricular autonomy, focus on at-risk students in enrollment, alternative certifications, exemptions from collective bargaining, evaluation procedures, and waivers from other state laws e/65.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not sufficiently describe how it will assist in expanding flexibility. For example, there is no explanation as to how additional flexibility on funding will come out of these subgrants. In addition, there is evidence that some current flexibility (e.g., assistance with selling bonds) is not being implemented e/40.

Reader's Score: 4

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

- 1. 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: 15

Sub

- 1. The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project**

Sub

on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks (up to 10 points)

Strengths:

A detailed management plan and timeline through 2027 are provided. The plan contains task analyzed components of project objectives e/67. A Project Team comprised of a group of qualified individuals representing extensive experience in charter school and education management is included, as well as the resumes for each key personnel e/66. The applicant has a plan to provide supplemental resources to assist in capacity building e/67.

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses in this section.

Reader's Score: 10

2. The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project (up to 3 points)

Strengths:

The applicant provides some information on the collection and analysis of program data. There are some details on the components of the project, and the mechanisms for continuous improvement are described, including how the feedback will be incorporated e/73.

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses in this section.

Reader's Score: 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:

The proposed time commitments of the project team indicate that there may be some issues with capacity, but support from other departments may be sufficient e/59.

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses in this section.

Reader's Score: 2

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. At Least One Authorized Public Chartering Agency Other than a Local Educational Agency, or an Appeals Process. (0 to 1 points)

To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that it is located in a State that--

(a) Allows at least one entity that is not a local educational agency (LEA) to be an authorized public chartering agency for developers seeking to open a charter school in the State; or

(b) In the case of a State in which LEAs are the only authorized public chartering agencies, the State has an appeals process for the denial of an application for a charter school.

Strengths:

Connecticut law dictates that the state be the principal authorizer for schools meeting (a) of this priority e/20.

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses in this section.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Competitive Preference Priority 2

- 1. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that 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. (up to 2 points)**

Strengths:

The state is improving its funding to meet the foundation funding level and the weighted per pupil funding method e/20.

Weaknesses:

The applicant describes improvements to the funding model but does not explicitly demonstrate that charter schools are funded equitably with traditional schools e/20. Most of the improvements are incentive based and don't demonstrate parity with traditional school funding e/20.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Competitive Preference Priority 3

- 1. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that the State in which it is located uses best practices from charter schools to help improve struggling schools and LEAs. (up to 1 points)**

Strengths:

State law requires that charters share best practices. In addition, an annual report on a collection of charter school practices is disseminated to all local superintendents e/21.

Weaknesses:

The proposal states that charter schools are required to initiate collaboration on best practices. It does not say what the obligation is for the local schools to adopt the practices. The applicant does not give any examples of a traditional school using a charter school intervention to improve outcomes. The applicant also fails to describe the process for identifying best practices and whether there is a data-based component demonstrating the success of the interventions e/21. This application was thoroughly discussed with respect to each competitive priority. My scores reflect my professional assessment of the application with respect to those priorities.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority 4 - Competitive Preference Priority 4

1. To be eligible 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: (up to 3 points)

- 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
- f) Low- or no-cost leasing privileges.

Strengths:

The state supports charter school facilities by sharing bond issues and by providing access to public facilities e/22.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide facility funds on a per-pupil basis. All facilities awards are grants from the CSDE. e/22. The proposed subgrants will not improve nor change the facilities challenges.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 5 - Competitive Preference Priority 5

1. To be eligible 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. (up to 3 points)

Strengths:

The applicant provides evidence that charter schools outperform traditional schools in meeting proficiency on the statewide assessments e/23. The project's logic model highlights that high-quality charter school growth will have an "outsized impact" on educationally disadvantaged students e/25 Charter schools in Connecticut serve a larger proportion of educationally at-risk and disadvantaged students than traditional schools e/23 Charter schools are incentivized to enroll and support at-risk students. These incentives include supplemental funding for these students. Charter schools are also free to seek lottery waivers that give a preference to students in four specific categories e/24 The applicant proposes to include a section in the subgrant with questions focusing on Access and Equity and to provide technical assistance in key areas related to supporting at-risk students e/23.

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses in this section

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/25/2022 10:43 AM