

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

Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools, Inc. (S282A230011)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	35	30
Quality of Eligible Applicants Receiving Subgrants		
1. Eligible Applicants	15	13
State Plan		
1. State Plan	35	31
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	15	9
Sub Total	100	83
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	2	1
Sub Total	2	1
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
1. CPP4	2	2
Sub Total	2	2
Competitive Preference Priority 5		
Competitive Preference Priority 5		
1. CPP5	3	3
Sub Total	3	3

Total

110

92

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - State Entities - 9: 84.282A

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools, Inc. (S282A230011)

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;

Strengths:

The applicant demonstrates a clear rationale for the proposed project (e-17-23). The detailed logic model appropriately lists the resources consisting of various project stakeholders and funding to achieve the long-term outcomes of increasing the number of charter schools, improving outcomes for underserved students, and improving capacity in the charter school sector and authorizing system (e-24). The proposed activities include marketing, technical assistance to school developers and authorizers; and a teacher pipeline to increase capacity in charter schools (e-24). The applicant's assumption of implementing a strong subgrant process to increase the quality of the approval process supports the rationale for the proposed project (e-24).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are 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

Strengths:

The applicant proposes four goals to achieve within the proposed five-year grant period (e-25). The goals effectively seek to increase the number of public charter school seats by 4,200, issue 20 subgrants, assist authorizers to develop and adopt two policies or templates to serve as models for the authorizing of charter schools, and establish two host schools for student teachers paired with mentor teachers (e-25). The applicant generally lists some effective methods of evaluation such as the use of surveys as an effective method of evaluation to determine the level of community input and parent engagement (e-26).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not fully propose objective performance measures in its evaluation of project objectives, and simply lists the data sources that will inform the extent to which the outcomes are going to be achieved. For example, the data sources include registration data, enrollment data, MOU, materials, and meeting minutes, which

Sub

are not methods of evaluation such as conducting statistical analyses with the data collected (e-26). The applicant does not distinguish between collecting quantitative and qualitative data. While the use of surveys may produce qualitative data, the applicant does not specify if it does. The applicant does not indicate whether data collection efforts produce formative or summative results which would aid in establishing if efforts such as the teacher pipeline project would produce the anticipated results (e-26).

Reader's Score: 2

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

Strengths:

The applicant somewhat demonstrates that the State's entity's objectives for the quality charter school program carried out under the CSP State Entity program are ambitious. The applicant effectively establishes that its goal to increase charter school seats by 4,200 is ambitious as the State Education Agency (SEA) added only 832 seats for the entire state between the five-year period of 2017-2022, in comparison (e-27). This ambitious goal will likely increase interest in developing additional charter schools within its state (e-28).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not demonstrate that all State entity objectives are ambitious. For example, the applicant does not indicate whether the proposed educator pipeline is ambitious as it anticipates implementing the project in only two of the 20 proposed charter schools (e-28). The applicant does not provide comparative data that would underscore to what extent the educator pipeline will be ambitious.

Reader's Score: 3

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

Strengths:

The applicant effectively demonstrates that the projected number of subgrant awards for each grant project year is supported by evidence of demand and need. The applicant fittingly establishes that the demand for charter school seats significantly exceeds its supply. For example, in 2021-2022, the state operated 48 charter schools serving 24,038 students. There is a waitlist of 18,000 students wanting to enroll in charter schools in the state. The applicant effectively indicates that the demand for charter schools is high due to a 90% satisfaction rate of charter schools among parents (e-30). Charter school enrollment during the pandemic increased by 4.83% while traditional public school enrollment decreased by 3.15% which supports the demand and need for additional charter school seats in the state (e-30). The applicant appropriately demonstrates that the proposed average subgrant award amount is supported by evidence of the need of applicants. The applicant fittingly establishes that subgrant funding amounts will vary depending on the type of the subgrant with amounts not exceeding [REDACTED]. The applicant appropriately estimates to award a total of 20 new subgrants (e-29) costing an estimated [REDACTED] (e-33). The average CSP grant award fittingly is upward of [REDACTED] (e-29). To effectively determine the need of each subgrantee, the applicant appropriately requires each subgrantee to submit a budget supported by the work plan, not to meet a predetermined amount of funds. In addition, the applicant effectively differentiates subgrantees' needs as new school start-ups will require more resources than the expansion of an existing school (e-32).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Sub

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of Eligible Applicants Receiving Subgrants

- 1. The likelihood that the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the program will meet the State entity's objectives for the quality charter school program and improve education results for students.**

Strengths:

The applicant mostly demonstrates that eligible applicants receiving subgrants will meet the State's entity objectives for the quality charter school program and improve education results for students. The 2022 Maryland Charter Schools Program publication demonstrates clear expectations and definitions which will significantly contribute to the likelihood that applicants meet the objectives. For example, the applicant provides a clear definition of 'high-quality charter school' which contributes to the applicants' high likelihood of meeting the objectives. The definition appropriately includes (A) shows evidence of strong academic results, which may include strong student academic growth, as determined by a State; (B) has no significant issues in the areas of student safety, financial and operational management, or statutory or regulatory compliance; (C) has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement, including graduation rates where applicable, for all students served by the charter school; and (D) has demonstrated success in increasing student academic achievement, including graduation rates where applicable, for each of the subgroups of students, as defined in section 1111(c)(2), except that such demonstration is not required in a case in which the number of students in a group is insufficient to yield statistically reliable information or the results would reveal personally identifiable information about an individual student (e-227 and e-248-249). The applicant effectively establishes that it has extensive experience in selecting those applicants who demonstrate high potential and impactful plans which contributes to the high quality of applicants. Subgrantees must fittingly undergo a rigorous authorizing process with application reviews conducted by peer reviewers and an interview of subgrantee's proposals conducted by the applicant. Priority will be given to those applicants in rural areas and high schools where specific regional needs are addressed. A comprehensive monitoring system of applicants ensures that the quality of charter schools and the improvement of education results for students are maintained throughout the grant period and beyond (e-42-50).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not describe how eligible applicants receiving subgrants will meet all the State entity's objectives for the quality charter school program and improve education results for students. For example, the applicant does not describe how it will encourage projects that include a community-centered approach featuring meaningful engagement.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - State Plan

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

Reader's Score: 31

Sub

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

Sub

Strengths:

The applicant demonstrates a comprehensive monitoring plan for eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State's entity program (e-42-52). The applicant proposes to hire two contract monitors who will conduct site visits and utilize an established protocol for the monitoring activities (e-42). An orientation session will innovatively familiarize the subgrantees with the monitoring schedules and monitoring requirements (e-43). The monitoring schedule effectively includes quarterly-, bimonthly-, and annual monitoring while fiscal and program monitoring is fittingly taking place on an ongoing basis (e-44-46). A clear timeline depicts the monitoring activities during the funding period (e-46-48). For example, the monitoring of the subgrantees enrollment status, the status of outreach and recruitment, invoicing, and inventory will appropriately be conducted during year one of the grant period (e-47). The applicant proposes a fitting mechanism that addresses deficiencies during the monitoring process where subgrantees are given 15 days to rectify the identified issues, and a corrective action plan will be implemented if multiple deficiencies are found (e-49-50). The applicant appropriately proposes to monitor the enrollment of students from underserved communities and establishes verifications that services for student groups such as English language learners and students with IEPs, are appropriate (e-51).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are 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;

Strengths:

The applicant proposes a thorough approach that will avoid duplication of work for the charter schools and authorized public chartering agencies (e-52-55). For example, the applicant proposes to develop a model charter application and renewal document that will streamline the application process. The application could effectively lead to 76% of district authorizers reducing duplication of work and saving time and resources (e-54).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are 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;

Strengths:

i. The applicant proposes a comprehensive technical assistance plan to eligible applicants receiving subgrants (e-55-61). For example, a resource titled The Planning Year Operations Playbook assists new subgrantees during their initial year of operation (e-57). It effectively provides a checklist for essential activities and serves as a repository for important documents which will aid new subgrantees in managing start-up tasks effectively (e-57).

ii. The applicant fittingly proposes to provide technical assistance to support quality authorizing. For example, the applicant effectively plans to initiate a collaborative partnership between the National Network for District Authorizers and an experienced facilitator to hold quarterly meetings, conduct liaison meetings, provide liaison workgroups, and develop model application and renewal documents to support authorizers (e-60).

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 10

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 proposes to solicit and consider input from parents and other members of the community on the implementation and operation of charter schools. The job description of CSP Coordinator lists substantial initiatives that purposefully solicit input from parents and the community and provides evidence that parent and community input in the implementation and operation of charter schools is vital to the success of the proposed project (e-90-91). For examples, CSP Coordinator's responsibilities include soliciting parent and community input for those seeking high-quality school options; supporting the implementation of Charter Schools Program State Entities Grant by coordinating parent outreach efforts, creating content for Parent Academies and technical assistance modules, and building parent steering committees at grant-funded campuses; building multiple parent teams that drive local issue work and develop charter school parents into a powerful voice in their schools, neighborhoods, cities, and statewide; referring subgrantees for quality improvement TA for issues relating to the parent and community engagement quality of their schools; providing technical assistance for parent engagement activities; supporting the work to create surveys for parents and subgrantees; and arranging parent focus groups and compile feedback into usable data (e-90-91).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not sufficiently describe how it will solicit and consider input from all parents and other members of the community to establish representation from all parents. For example, the applicant indicates that a significant number of students are English language learners but does not propose strategies how it will solicit and consider input from parents whose language is other than English.

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.

Strengths:

The applicant effectively demonstrates the flexibility of charter schools in its state as they have flexibility in selecting curriculum, pedagogy, school design, school calendars, selecting staff, staffing models, and control over finances (e-62-63).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not describe how it will maximize the flexibility provided to charter schools under such law and only generally states that it seeks to expand it by allowing more flexibility in the PCS application/renewal guide for authorizers without providing details regarding the extent of the proposed flexibility (e-62).

Reader's Score: 3

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: 9

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**

Strengths:

The applicant proposes a mostly adequate plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget. For example, the applicant proposes a list of activities along with somewhat appropriate timelines and the corresponding staff responsible for carrying out the activities (e-64-66). The applicant's demonstrated experience in the administration of charter programs will enhance the potential of achieving the objectives on time and within budget (e-63). The applicant effectively proposes to acquire a Grant Management Program with robust customer support and customization options which will streamline workflows, project management, and financial reporting which will support the management of the proposed project and help to achieve the proposed objectives (e-64).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not list the corresponding objectives as they relate to the list of activities which makes it difficult to determine if the management plan is fully adequate to achieve the proposed objectives on time and within budget (e-64-66). Some of the proposed activities are not supported by appropriate timelines. For example, the activity RFQ & hire Site Monitors is proposed to happen only once during the five-year grant period which seems inadequate as this process is typically performed annually to attract potential charter school startups throughout the grant period (e-64). The proposed management plan does not include milestones which would aid in achieving the proposed objectives on time and within budget (e-64-66).

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

The applicant effectively integrates a system for ensuring feedback in the operation of the proposed project. For example, the applicant conducts an annual member survey that appropriately seeks feedback from various stakeholders including operators, developers, TA providers, and members (e-404). In addition, ongoing communication with the charter liaisons at the local level, quarterly meetings provide updates on the CSP grants (e-54). The applicant innovatively proposes to utilize tools to aggregate stakeholder feedback without revealing identifying characteristics which will aid in getting meaningful feedback from stakeholders.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not describe procedures for ensuring continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

Reader's Score: 2

- 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:

The applicant effectively lists the time commitment of the project director and other key personnel which are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project. They fittingly include Executive Director .15 FTE; Project Director .90 FTE; Program Manager .90 FTE; Director of Membership .20 FTE; Project Coordinator .50 FTE (e-67). The applicant lists the responsibilities of each personnel which establishes that the corresponding time commitments are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the project. For example, the project director is responsible for gathering parent and community input, coordinating parent outreach, developing content for TA modules, and establishing parent focus groups committees at grant-funded campuses (e-69). The proposed time commitment of .50 FTE is appropriate and adequate to meet the responsibilities corresponding to the position of project director.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 2

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Competitive Preference Priority 1

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

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.

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

Please specify whether they meet (a) or (b) and clearly explain why in the strengths.

(0 or 1 points)

Strengths:

(b) The applicant appropriately demonstrates that public charter school applicants have the right to appeal an application denial to the State Board of Education (e-70). The State Board of Education handles the appeals process and makes recommendations to the LEA (e-70).

Weaknesses:

(b) No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. To be eligible to receive points under this priority, a State entity must demonstrate that it is located in a state that 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 appropriately demonstrates that funding of Public Charter Schools in its state is commensurate with funding for traditional public schools (e-70).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Competitive Preference Priority 3

1. To be eligible to receive points under this priority, a State entity must demonstrate that it is located in a state that uses best practices from charter schools to help improve struggling schools and LEAs.

(up to 2 points)

Strengths:

The applicant somewhat demonstrates that it disseminates resources to promote improved practices including opportunities to learn from other PCSs through the School-to-School Sharing program which offers stipends to PCSs for sharing their best practices on topics identified through the 2019 Needs Analysis (e71).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not demonstrate that its state is using best practices from charter schools to help improve struggling schools and LEAs. The applicant proposes to disseminate best practice resources to schools but does not explicitly indicate how best practices from charter schools are utilized to help improve struggling schools and LEAs.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 4 - Competitive Preference Priority 4

1. To be eligible to receive points under this priority, a State entity must demonstrate that it is located in a State that 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
- f) Low- or no-cost leasing privileges

(up to 2 points)

Strengths:

(b)The applicant demonstrates that its state provides charter schools assistance with facilities acquisition. For example, the applicant demonstrates that LEAs are required to offer surplus buildings to PCS operators as per state law (e-71). In addition, any portion of the building or property occupied and used by a PCS is exempt from property taxes for the duration of its occupation and use as a public PCS (e-72).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority 5 - Competitive Preference Priority 5

- 1. To be eligible to receive points under this priority, a State entity must demonstrate that 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 states that it will develop technical assistance activities that focus on dropout prevention, dropout recovery, and comprehensive career counseling (e-72). The state's charter school program demonstrates that dropout prevention, dropout recovery, and comprehensive career counseling services are services provided to all students including at-risk students.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 3

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Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools, Inc. (S282A230011)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	35	29
Quality of Eligible Applicants Receiving Subgrants		
1. Eligible Applicants	15	13
State Plan		
1. State Plan	35	31
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	15	9
Sub Total	100	82
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	2	1
Sub Total	2	1
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
1. CPP4	2	2
Sub Total	2	2
Competitive Preference Priority 5		
Competitive Preference Priority 5		
1. CPP5	3	3
Sub Total	3	3

Total

110

91

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - State Entities - 9: 84.282A

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools, Inc. (S282A230011)

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: 29

Sub

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

Strengths:

- The applicant addresses activities to develop a cohesive statewide system that supports the opening of new charter schools and/or the replication and expansion of charter schools to increase the number of charter school seats by 4200 in five years via a subgrant program. The applicant provides a rationale for establishing and operating a subgrant program to increase the charter school seats in Maryland by citing data that revealed (a) students in public charter schools outperformed students in public schools in 2022 state exams and (b) graduation rates of students in public charter schools are higher than that of public-school students in Maryland (pp. e17-e18).
- The applicant presents a logic model that addresses key priorities of the proposed project, i.e., increasing the number of charter school seats, increasing knowledge and capacity of authorizers and teachers to continue to improve quality (p. e24).
- The proposed technical assistance program builds on the applicant's experience in the past five years offering technical support to eligible schools in varied stages of development, subgrantees, and charter school authorizers in Maryland to help them open and prepare for the operation of new charter schools, to replicate and expand charter schools, and working with authorized public chartering agencies to improve authorizing quality (Appendix C, pp. e418-e459).

Weaknesses:

- The logic model does not specify data points, nor yearly benchmarks to produce results regarding the enhancement of teacher pipeline, teacher diversity, and teacher retention, including the targeted number of student teachers that will participate in the teacher pipeline program and the nature and frequency of the coaching support they will receive (p. e24).

Reader's Score: 4

Sub

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 proposed methods of evaluation include performance measures that are related to one intended outcome of the proposed project, i.e., to establish and implement a subgrant program to increase the number of preK-12th grade public charter school seats in Maryland by 4200 in five years. The applicant provides yearly performance measures for the number of subgrants to be issued (p. e29).

Weaknesses:

- The proposed methods of evaluation do not include yearly performance measures that are related to the success of technical assistance programming to support subgrantees and to enhance the capabilities of the State's operators and authorizers to boost quality and student performance (pp. e25-e26).
- The proposed methods of evaluation do not include performance measures that will provide qualitative and quantitative data related to an intended outcome of the proposed project, i.e., to enhance teacher capacity and teacher retention and to cultivate a diverse, well-prepared, inclusive, sustainable educator pipeline to improve quality. Specifically, the proposed methods of evaluation do not include yearly performance measures that will provide quantitative and qualitative data related to the number of targeted student teachers that will participate in the proposed teacher pipeline project, the nature and frequency of professional support that they will receive (pp. e25-26, e.62).

Reader's Score: 2

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

Strengths:

- The applicant's key objective of increasing public charter school seats by 4200 in Maryland may be attainable via the proposed subgrant program to support 20 new, replicating, or expanding public charter schools during a 5-year grant period. The applicant cited recent research conducted in urban, suburban, and rural areas in Maryland indicating continued high demand for public charter schools (pp. e31-e32). Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), the current SE grantee, was successful in establishing and operating a successful subgrant program and issuing 19 subgrants from 2017-2022. The MSDE subgrant recipients added a total of 7600 new public charter school seats (pp. e27, pp. e418-e459).

Weaknesses:

- The applicant does not provide adequate detail and yearly measures to reach the goal of establishing a

Sub

diverse and well-prepared teacher pipeline. Signing an MOU with at least one university school of education by the end of Year 1 and establishing two host schools for student teachers, paired with mentor teachers by 2025, are not ambitious objectives (p. e26).

Reader's Score: 3

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

Strengths:

- The applicant provides a projected number of subgrants for each project year and proposed average funding amounts per subgrant supported by a detailed explanation. Specifically, the applicant proposes (a) opening, replicating, or expanding 14 public charter schools during a 5-year grant period, (b) offering different subgrantee amounts depending on type and criterion, and (c) offering subgrantees no more than [REDACTED] in total funding (pp. e29-e32).
- The applicant discusses recent research conducted in urban, suburban, and rural areas across the State to demonstrate demand and need for the projected number of subgrant awards during a 5-year grant period (pp. e31-e32).
- The applicant includes supporting documentation regarding the methodology and calculations used to determine the number of proposed subgrant awards and the average and maximum subgrant award amount (pp. e32-e35). The proposed average subgrant award amount is supported by evidence of the need of applicants. Specifically, the applicant proposes to offer (a) "plus up" grant funds to incentivize applications in priority areas (i.e., rural, high school, high need) and (b) supplemental awards to grandfathered subgrantees to address specific financial requirements or project needs that have emerged since their initial grant award (pp. e29-e32).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of Eligible Applicants Receiving Subgrants

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

Strengths:

- The applicant presents a fully developed plan to award subgrants, including detailed descriptions of activities, timelines and/or processes for all the required components to the subgrant application (pp. e35-e41). Specifically, (a) there is extensive information about how the applicant will publicize the availability of subgrants, the subgrant requirements, and the application process via social media, website, newsletter, and in person and virtual outreach channels, (b) The applicant describes in detail how the subgrant process will support diverse charter models and offer competitive priority to rural communities, high-need LEAs, and high schools, (c) the applicant gives a comprehensive description of the subgrant application requirements, which include a needs assessments, roles and responsibilities of all parties, role of authorizer in reviewing charter school performance and operations, and flexibilities afforded to charter

schools under the law, (d) The applicant included details regarding the process for selecting peer reviewers and the process for determining eligibility, reviewing, and awarding subgrants, and, (e) The applicant provided information about how it will ensure each subgrantee will plan for student transformation needs (pp. e223-e240).

Weaknesses:

- The applicant does not provide a detailed description regarding encouraging projects that include a community-centered approach with opportunities for meaningful parent and community engagement, including a detailed description regarding how to promote equitable access or participation of parents and community members with disability and/or those who speak a home language other than English and are not yet proficient/fluent in English (pp. e223-e240)

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - State Plan

1. The State entity's plan to--

Reader's Score: 31

Sub

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

Strengths:

- The applicant provides a detailed monitoring plan on how the applicant will monitor subgrantees regularly, including (a) a description of all activities and systems the applicant and subgrantee will use to ensure effective monitoring via site visits, desk monitoring, and risk assessment (pp. e42-e46), (b) a complete monitoring timeline (pp.e46-48), and (c) a plan for identifying risk (p. e49), and (d) how deficiencies will be addressed by the subgrantee (pp.e48-e50).
- The applicant addresses how it will monitor subgrantee expenditures with clear processes to ensure that subgrantees are using the funds for activities to help meet the educational needs of their students, specifically students with disabilities and English Language Learners (p. e51).
- The plan includes processes to evaluate the subgrantees' plans for sustainability once the funds are no longer available (p. e51-e.52).
- The applicant addresses how it will ensure transparency so that the monitoring findings and corrective action plans are available to families and the public (p. e52).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found

Sub

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;

Strengths:

- The applicant presents a detailed plan to avoid the duplication of work for charter schools and authorized public chartering agencies and significantly reduce the burden for both (pp. e44, e52-e54). The proposed plan includes (a) MAPCS contracting with an authorized support organization or research organization to develop a model charter application and renewal document and (b) regular communication with authorized public chartering agencies (pp. e52-e54).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found

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;**

Strengths:

- The applicant presents a comprehensive plan to provide technical assistance to support subgrantees in opening and operating new charter schools and in replicating and expanding high quality charter schools (pp. e55-e56), including a variety of activities and modalities (face-to-face, webinars, and via videoconferencing platform) to help subgrantees in student recruitment, enrollment, and retention that promotes the inclusion of all students, including educationally disadvantaged students, and reducing the overuse of discipline practices that remove students from the classroom. These activities build on the applicants' experience in the last five years delivering eight Charter Starter ("New Start") training programming cycles (over 140 hours/40 virtual live workshops) with 499 registrants and assisting 17 public charter school applicants with submissions to school district authorizers to support the opening, expansion, or replication of 10 public charter schools. The plan also includes an expansion or replication charter design series to support existing public charter schools (p. e.55).
- The applicant proposes a plan to support quality authorizing efforts by authorized public chartering agencies in the State. The plan includes a variety of topics, modalities, activities to deliver assistance to address all key areas (including assessing annual performance data of the schools, financial review, and assistance with annual audits, accountability to the performance agreements, review of processes related to renewal, non-renewal, or revocation of the school's charter, establishing clear plans and procedures to assist students enrolled in a charter school that closes to attend other high-school charter schools), as well as other topics directly related to the specific needs of the subgrant recipients (pp. e56-e60).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found

Sub

Reader's Score: 10

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 presents a moderately detailed plan for soliciting input from the parents and other community members regarding the implementation and operation of charter schools in the State. The proposed plan includes creating a family section on the website, collecting community input via online surveys and focus group discussions with parents in subgrantee schools, and sharing best practices learned in the teacher pipeline project (pp. e61-e62).

Weaknesses:

- The applicant does not discuss in detail how the input from the community will be used when implementing and operating charter schools (p. e62).
- The applicant does not include strategies to solicit input from parents and other members of the community who speak home languages other than English. The proposed plan to collect online surveys and in-person questionnaires, and to conduct focus group discussions may limit participation of parents and community members who speak home languages other than English (p. e62).

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.

Strengths:

- The applicant presents a description of the flexibility offered by the State's charter law regarding the selection of curriculum, pedagogy, school design, school calendars, selecting staff, staffing models, and control over finances. (p.e62).

Weaknesses:

- The plan of how the applicant will work to maximize the flexibility provided to charter schools under such law lacks specificity, regarding details on (a) how the applicant will work to clarify what constitutes "concern" or "breach" so that decision-making will not be arbitrary, and (b) how the applicant will work with the largest charter sectors to facilitate transparent contracts to encompass accountability and autonomy (pp. e62-e63).

Reader's Score: 3

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: 9

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

Strengths:

- Applicant presents an adequately developed management plan that includes a timeline and milestones that are realistic and appropriate for the objectives of the grant (pp. e64-e66).
- The proposed budget aligns with the management of the grant and provides adequate resources for all project tasks (pp. e461-e474).

Weaknesses:

- The proposed management plan does not clearly define responsibilities. Overlapping responsibilities of project personnel for accomplishing project tasks may hinder achieving the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget (pp. e64-e66).
- The proposed plan does not include sufficient detail regarding the management of external partners, including higher education partners that will participate in the teacher pipeline project (pp. e64-e66).
- The proposed management plan includes a goal of sharing best practices in the support, professional development, and retention of student teachers at the end of the proposed project. Details are missing on the yearly milestones regarding formative assessment of best practices in coaching and supporting student teachers participating in the teacher pipeline project (e. p62),

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

- The applicant states that they will seek feedback from stakeholders via an online satisfaction survey (pp. e. 66, Appendix F, Annual Satisfaction Survey).

Weaknesses:

- The applicant does not provide details regarding how they will use feedback collected from the online satisfaction survey to improve the proposed project (pp. e66-67).
- Other than an online annual satisfaction survey, the applicant provides little information about their plan to

Sub

collect, analyze, and use feedback for continuous improvement to their proposed project (pp. e66-e67).

Reader's Score: 2

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:

- Applicant presents detailed information on the time commitments of the project director and other key personnel, including the percentage of time each staff member plans to spend on the proposed project. The time dedicated to the project is appropriate and adequate to meet the goals and objectives of the grant (p. e67).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found

Reader's Score: 2

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Competitive Preference Priority 1

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

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.

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

Please specify whether they meet (a) or (b) and clearly explain why in the strengths.

(0 or 1 points)

Strengths:

- The applicant meets this priority because the State has an appeals process for the denial of an application for a charter school (p. e70). While LEAs are the only authorized public chartering agencies in Maryland, public charter school applicants have the right to appeal an application denial to the State Board of Education. The State Board will either uphold the decision, direct the LEA to grant the charter, or remand the decision back for reconsideration (p. e70). The applicant demonstrated that the appeal process works in practice by showing that the Board has ruled on 34 appeals from 29 unique school developers since the passage of MD's Charter Law and ruled in favor of the applicant 12 times. In eight cases schools obtained charters and in three, the State Board directed the LEA to issue a charter, including two recent CSP subgrantees (p. e70).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Competitive Preference Priority 2

- 1. To be eligible to receive points under this priority, a State entity must demonstrate that it is located in a state that 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 explained eligibility for Competitive Preference Priority regarding equitable financing by citing a 20216-study commissioned by the MD legislature, showing direct spending of the per pupil charter allocation plus the value of LEA provided services was in most cases comparable to LEA's spending for traditional schools in Maryland (p. e71).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Competitive Preference Priority 3

- 1. To be eligible to receive points under this priority, a State entity must demonstrate that it is located in a state that uses best practices from charter schools to help improve struggling schools and LEAs.**

(up to 2 points)

Strengths:

- Applicant demonstrates that the State is using best practices from charter schools to help improve struggling schools and LEAs via a statewide virtual conference and School-to-School Sharing Program that offers stipends to public charter schools for sharing their best practices (p. e73).

Weaknesses:

- Applicant does not include evidence that the methods of sharing best practices (via a statewide virtual conference and School-to-School Sharing Program) are resulting in improved student learning outcomes in struggling schools (p.e73).

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 4 - Competitive Preference Priority 4

1. To be eligible to receive points under this priority, a State entity must demonstrate that it is located in a State that 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
- f) Low- or no-cost leasing privileges

(up to 2 points)

Strengths:

- The applicant demonstrates that the State provides charter schools low-cost leasing privileges by citing examples of charter schools across Maryland that negotiated rents below the market values (pp. e71-72).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority 5 - Competitive Preference Priority 5

1. To be eligible to receive points under this priority, a State entity must demonstrate that 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 demonstrates that it supports charter schools that serve at-risk students through varied strategies that include (a) granting competitive preference points to subgrant applicants offering activities such as dropout prevention, dropout recovery, or comprehensive career counseling services, (b) developing TA activities on dropout prevention, dropout recovery, and comprehensive career counseling to enhance support systems for underserved students in PCS, (c) requiring subgrant applicants to provide a description in the capacity interview of how their PCS's program addresses the needs of educationally underserved students and (d) offering TA regarding the provisions of MD's charter law (Md. Educ. Art. 9-102), including guidance on serving all students and utilizing weighted lotteries, which can provide slightly greater admission chances to students from underserved groups (pp. e72-e73).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/29/2023 01:53 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/28/2023 04:37 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools, Inc. (S282A230011)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	35	30
Quality of Eligible Applicants Receiving Subgrants		
1. Eligible Applicants	15	13
State Plan		
1. State Plan	35	31
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	15	9
Sub Total	100	83
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	2	1
Sub Total	2	1
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
1. CPP4	2	2
Sub Total	2	2
Competitive Preference Priority 5		
Competitive Preference Priority 5		
1. CPP5	3	3
Sub Total	3	3

Total

110

92

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - State Entities - 9: 84.282A

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools, Inc. (S282A230011)

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;

Strengths:

The applicant provides a fully developed response. The rationale provided for Maryland Alliance for Public Charter Schools' (MAPCS) Maryland Momentum Program (MMP) is that the program will establish a comprehensive support system to foster growth of the charter sector in Maryland, which is in demand, and use public charter schools to increase educational outcomes for traditionally underserved student populations, while leveraging objectives of the state's "Blueprint for MD's Future" (e17 or page 2). The applicant provides evidence that public charter schools in the state are proven to have academic benefits for students and outperform Baltimore City and Prince George districts (e18 or page 3). Further, the design provides incentives for underserved students, including rural schools, location in districts with a significant number of schools identified for comprehensive support, and high schools (pages e17-18, or pages 2-3). The applicant explains how the work improves struggling schools through mentoring and technical assistance.

The proposal seeks to add six new or replicated schools, and eight expansions, and provide supplemental awards for six schools with current CSP funding. This is to result in 4,200 pre-K-12 public charter school seats in Maryland (an 18% increase) over five years and enhance charter sector and authorizer knowledge and capacity to sustain efforts in improving quality.

The proposal describes six projects based in research that demonstrates success (e17-23 or pages 2-8):

- (1) Project 1 - Establish and operate a successful CSP SE Subgrant Program
- (2) Project 2 - Provide Technical Assistance that prepare news, replicating, and expanding schools (schools adding grade levels, including Pre-K) for competitive funding opportunities
- (3) Project 3 - Provide Technical assistance and monitoring for new and existing schools
- (4) Project 4 - Provide Technical assistance for Charter School Authorizers
- (5) Project 5 - Create the MMP Teacher Pipeline Project, emphasizing growing diverse teachers
- (6) Project 6 - Encouraging collaboration by sharing best and promising practices statewide,

Project activities are well-developed and are designed to complement the State's overall Blueprint plan. Strong subgrant supports that include: building capacity by developing new school leaders, providing adequate time and training before opening or replicating, supports and funding for new schools, growing successful schools, and strengthening authorizers are key tenets of a successful a charter school sector and make a quality project. Training new teachers, particularly those representative of students served, is supported by research as a strategy for

Sub

improving student achievement.

The Logic Model provided on page 9 (e24) does a good job of showing how grant activities align with short and midterm outcomes and longtime impact.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

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**

Strengths:

The applicant provides clear, succinct, appropriate, achievable and relevant measurable objectives in Table 1 - Project Objectives, goals, outcomes, and performance measures (targets), along with data sources to be used for timely evaluation (e26 or page 11). Table 2 (e29 or page 14) provides intended objectives for each subgroup award type by year. The applicant provides clear explanation for how they calculated their projections to be both realistic and aspirational (e29-30 or pages 14-15).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not fully address the use of qualitative data.

For Objective 2: "Increase knowledge and capacity in the sector and authorizers to continue the work," the applicant specifies the number of planned activities by category throughout the grant period. These are process measures (meeting minutes, MOU's, etc.), more than impact measures. Similarly, pages e248-249 describe how charter school quality is determined in Maryland, but these indicators are not clearly integrated into the intended outcomes as yearly school performance benchmarks. It is not clear which performance measures will be reported annually.

It is unclear as to how many new teacher recruits will result throughout the years of the project.

An indicator of improved authorizer practices (other than adoption of two model policies) as a result of the project would be helpful.

Reader's Score: 2

- 3. The ambitiousness of the State entity's objectives for the quality charter school program carried out under the CSP State Entity program**

Strengths:

The response is adequately developed.

The applicant described how they analyzed past results and recent activities to set their program objectives, including charter school growth data and enrollment, student achievement and other data points. When the state was without CSP funding (2012-2017), charter school growth slowed substantially, opening only three new schools

Sub

and one conversion school (e27 or page 12). In the past five years, the Maryland charter sector successfully used nineteen CSP subgrant awards to open and expand public charter schools in the state, resulting in over 7,600 new public charter school seats (e30 or page 15).

The plan in this proposal is to add 4,200 additional seats through twenty subgrants over a five-year grant period. This is ambitious, but reasonable because there is an expressed need evidenced by a waiting list of 18,000 students (e30), and moderate, collaborative growth with LEA authorizers is purposefully designed for quality over quantity.

By bringing district authorizers together and leveraging their collective expertise, MAPCS seeks to establish a more streamlined, efficient, clear, and fair authorization process. This is ambitious given the current decentralized nature (25 distinctive approaches) of public charter school authorization in Maryland.

There is strong support for the program, as evidenced by the impressive number of support letters shown in e418-459.

Weaknesses:

More detail on the number of teachers expected to result from the teacher development pipeline would be helpful to gauge ambitiousness, as it was not stated how many new teachers would result and be placed in public charter schools over the grant period and beyond.

It is difficult to determine the ambitiousness of the objectives adding to the quality of the state's charter school program without discussion of how student and school academic performance, particularly struggling schools and traditionally underserved students, will have improved. The applicant states that seven public charter schools were closed from 2017-2022 (e27), but did not provide information on what barriers were faced and what lessons were learned that could inform this project. More information on how school quality will be monitored and the impact of supports to struggling schools would be helpful.

Reader's Score: 3

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

Strengths:

Both criteria are met. The response provides a fully developed plan to provide substantial support for the opening and expansion of public charter school options in Maryland (e30 or page 15).

The applicant provides strong evidence of demand and need for the projected subgrant awards, such as citing that during school year 2021-2022, there were 24,038 students enrolled in public charter schools and 18,000 students on waitlists (e30) in the State. The applicant explains that gentrification has caused families to seek more affordable living outside of but near the city, resulting in over-crowding in nearby suburban districts (e32). The applicant provides a strong strategic analysis of locations where new charters could be most successful, considering population and enrollment trends and other information.

The applicant states that a high level of parent satisfaction - averaging 90% - in Baltimore City public charter schools in 2018 (e 30 or page 15). Statewide, the Maryland charter school sector grew nearly +5% during the pandemic, while traditional district enrollment declined -3%. In 2019's "Maryland Charter School Needs and Strengths," 74% of respondents said that they are either already part of a network or they are interested in expansion or replication (e371 or page 18).

Sub

MAPCS has been developing a new school development pipeline over several years. Because Maryland law requires all teachers to be employees of the district, charter management companies are less interested in starting new schools in Maryland than they may be in other states. Thus, most public charter schools in the state have community group origins, often with little to no experience building a school from scratch.

The applicant states that in 2022, "MAPCS engaged with 101 potential public charter school founders, who represented 72 potential founding groups across 11 counties in MD (page 15). The applicant identifies two very likely new school candidates for Y1 new school subgrants – New Village Academy High School in Ann Arundel County and Bilingual Global Citizens K-8 in Baltimore County (page 16).

The applicant reports that since 2019, 80% of schools that opened, expanded, converted, or replicated (10) and 17 public charter school applicant submissions to LEAs had benefited from MAPCS' technical assistance and supports (e18 or page 3).

Subgrant application processes are well detailed and include family and community engagement activities, roles and responsibilities, flexibilities, a needs assessment and a sustainability plan, among others. The selection process is described well.

The proposed project intends to bring coherence to authorization in the state and builds authorizer capacity to approve and monitor high quality charter schools.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of Eligible Applicants Receiving Subgrants

- 1. The likelihood that the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the program will meet the State entity's objectives for the quality charter school program and improve education results for students.**

Strengths:

There is a strong likelihood that eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the program will rise to expectations and meet the State entity's objectives for a quality charter school program. The MMP provides detailed descriptions of activities, timelines and processes for subgrant applicants. MAPCS provides a thoughtful needs assessment and deep understanding of student and family needs in different parts of the state (urban, suburban, rural, high schools, for example), thus able to grow diverse models to meet specific student needs (e31-32 or pages 16-17). The plan includes prioritization of rural schools and high schools, and a communications plan.

MAPCS' staff have experience and knowledge gained from successfully managing state contracts and providing technical assistance to schools under the state's previous CSP award. The applicant has vetted schools they believe capable of successfully expanding or replicating. Pre-K will be new expansions for charter schools in the state.

Two newly opened schools were successfully developed using MAPCS' charter start program (e18). There is strong collaboration between the MAPCS and MDE (sharing spaces for training and joint communications, for example). Attention is given to building relationships across stakeholders, including authorizers.

Eligible applicants receiving subgrants will be set up for success from having clear and detailed eligibility criteria with timelines and requirements, being thoroughly vetted by experienced staff, having access to comprehensive needed developer information such as the Planning Year Operations Playbook (e57), and having technical assistance and mentoring. CSP funds will support the critical planning year, as state education funds will not be available yet. Charter

School Board members will be trained through this grant. MAPCS has established multiple outreach channels.

Best practices sharing and postings on MAPCS's website can reach educators and families throughout the state.

Weaknesses:

The applicant references that the project aligns with the State's Blueprint for Education but does not clearly reference the specific objectives in the Blueprint plan related to the charter sector, specifically the quality of the charter school program and how this investment improves education results for struggling students and for all students. More detail was needed on how the applicant will include a community-centered approach and support schools with meaningful family and community engagement activities.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - State Plan

1. The State entity's plan to--

Reader's Score: 31

Sub

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

Strengths:

MMP's monitoring plan and procedures are informed by needs identified through accountability metrics from the MSDE and LEA reviews. Monitoring protocols developed and deployed by MSDE over the last 5+ years will be used, bringing continuity (e42-48 or pages 27-33).

MAPCS will provide annual reports of activities and progress toward objectives to stakeholders.

The Program Manager will be responsible for Project Monitoring. Issues or concerns will be communicated to the Executive Director (page 35). To reduce bias, external monitors will be used for site visits.

MAPCS will work in concert with Authorizers and the MSDE Office of Innovation to assure compliance with State and Federal laws, expenditure of awards, audits, and evaluation.

Monitoring requirements for Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 are provided in Table 6. The Monitoring Timeline (pages 27-33. Additional information on monitoring – Charter School Program Subgrantee Monitoring – What to Expect, Subgrant Monitoring Template, and Monitoring Site Visit Template - can be found on pages e211-222.

Requests for financial drawdowns and expenditures will be reviewed by three MAPCS staff prior than being forwarded to the accountant.

The applicant has a plan for intervention for at-risk subgrantees and for how to address deficiencies, including a corrective action plan (pages 34-35).

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

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;

Strengths:

The applicant describes how they are working with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and with authorizers to avoid duplication of work for the charter schools and districts. This includes starting with a strong template as found in the 2022 MSDE MD CSP Application and Guidebook (Appendix F, e223-257). The application for subgrant funding aligns with applications required by the six district authorizers to apply for a new school or renewal of an existing. Since elements are mostly the same, significant portions of an applicant's approved public charter school application can be used to apply for subgrant funding, the process is streamlined for applicants, except for some required attachments.

The requirements of a subgrant application includes a needs analysis, parent, and community engagement strategies during the school's development and after it opens, and a plan for serving all students, including addressing the needs of diverse learners (e52-53 or pages 37-38). Developers with an approved district application will be eligible for subgrant funding. The applicant will work with districts to create a model, standardized application and renewal which will save time for new chartering agencies.

The applicant has thoughtfully designed the subgroup program to align with authorizer timelines and grant monitoring requirements. The Program Manger will meet with and communicate regularly with authorizers around grant monitoring, updates and ways to ways to bring efficiencies, such as reducing the reporting burden of schools (page 39).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

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;**

Strengths:

The applicant provides a good understanding of and details the types of technical assistance schools need to launch and continue successfully.

The project intends to partner with National Network for District Authorizers (NN4DA) to further authorizer quality. The contract provider will address topics such as legal requirements, assessing annual performance data, financial reviews, renewal and revocation processes, and others (page 46).

The project includes creation of a Guidebook of recommended policies, forms, checklists, etc. for authorizers (e223-257). The Charter Start series information is provided on e326.

The applicant assisted 17 public charter school applicants with their applications, resulting in 10 schools opening,

Sub

expanding or replicating in recent years (page 40).

Table 7, on page 41, details the type, description, and audience for technical assistance offerings.

MAPCS will partner with MSDE and LEA charter school liaisons (e57 or page 42) throughout the project.

Specialized resources, including resources on the planning year and operations framework, inclusive recruitment and enrollment practices, retention practices, school culture and discipline, accessing federal and state funds and resources, Board oversight, financial controls, and teacher pipeline are well described (e57-58 or pages 42-43).

The project intends to make authorizing in the state more cohesive and in alignment with quality authorizing practices. Table 8 – Authorizer TA (e61 or page 46) describes the types of technical assistance to be provided to authorizers

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

Reader's Score: 10

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 states that they will create family-community survey and in-person questionnaire to be used first year, and expect a response rate of at least 30%, and hold focus group interviews with over 25 family and community members, and will share results on their webpage (e61 or page 46).

Table 9 – Parent Engagement/Community Outreach/Communications on page 47 (e62) describes tasks, responsible parties and timeframe for these activities. Parent academies and parent steering committees are noted (e90-91).

The applicant explains that developers must have a recommendation from the LEA Superintendent and must present their proposed school program to the school board. The school board will then vote to determine approval or denial. This serves as a public hearing (e39 or page 24).

Weaknesses:

Only first year activities to gather input are described and the applicant does not fully detail what they will do with feedback information throughout the course of the grant. The applicant does not indicate if family and community surveys or focus groups will be provided in a way non-English speaking audiences can participate.

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.

Strengths:

On page 47 (e62), the applicant states "Maryland's charter schools have flexibility in curriculum, pedagogy, school design, school calendars, selecting staff, staffing models, and control over finances." State Board policy recognizes flexibility and autonomy as key components of the charter school concept, and that charter school are allowed "innovations in exchange for higher levels of accountability" (e400).

Sub

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not fully demonstrate how the State entity will work to maximize the flexibilities and autonomies that differentiate public charter school from traditional district schools, particularly concerning collective bargaining agreements and clear demonstrations of increased academic growth for all students.

Since Maryland law requires all teachers to be employees of district LEAs, a discussion of how MAPCS can support schools and LEAs when clarification is needed and concerns need to be addressed on staffing issues – such as hiring, firing, paying, evaluating staff, etc. It is not clear if typical charter school autonomies are granted to Maryland public charter schools – such as enrollment from multiple districts, longer school day or years, etc.

Reader's Score: 3

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: 9

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**

Strengths:

The applicant describes a smooth transition from a previous CSP grant to this proposed project. There are benefits from this continuity, including knowledge learned and relationships built.

Table 10 on pages 49-51 provides the MAPCS management plan and timeline, and Appendix F provides a Gantt chart that clearly defines the work to be done.

The applicant will be using customizable Grant management software with good technical support to manage important project deliverables and stay in constant communication with grantees.

Weaknesses:

A great deal needs to be done by October through November of 2023, including hiring and onboarding staff and communications and outreach.

It is difficult to assess the impact of the activities without clearly stated objectives and milestones for accomplishing tasks. There is not enough detail on how external partners will be monitored. There are concerns related to overlapping responsibilities.

Since affordable and appropriate facilities are often a major obstacle for public charter schools, more information on

Sub

how the applicant will assist schools in managing this important element is needed.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

The applicant describes several strategies to get feedback. Appendix F. describes the Annual Membership Survey and provides results from the 2021-2022 school year. The applicant explains that there is a link on the MAPCS website that can be used to contact or ask questions of MAPCS staff, and that contact information is shared on all correspondences. The applicant will use an online grant management program to keep in constant communication with grantees regarding needed documentation and deliverables (pages 51-52). The applicant states that corrective action plans will be posted on their website (page 52).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide a detailed plan of how they will collect and use family and community feedback.

It is unclear if satisfaction surveys are given to other stakeholders beyond the annual MAPCS member survey, how often various stakeholders (MSDE, authorizers, families, and community members, for example) will have opportunity to provide feedback, and how feedback will be used for continuous improvement.

The procedures for continuous improvement were not clear.

Reader's Score: 2

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 staffing plan, provided in Table 11 - FTE of Key MAPCS Personnel (page 52) and Resumes and position descriptions, found in Appendix B, provide good detail and convincing information on the appropriateness of staffing.

All staff have excellent experience and credentials and have led similar efforts in the State and with schools.

The Executive Director has served in their current role since May 2019 and has worked with district authorizers across the state.

Stephanie Simms, MBA, MAPCS' current Director of Operations, will serve as the Project Director. She co-created and opened the first charter school in Maryland. She has been with MAPCS since 2003 and possesses extensive experience in leadership, managing programs and state contracts, and in particular, the past SEA CSP Technical Assistance aspects.

The Teacher Pipeline Project lead holds a doctorate in African studies from Howard University, a master's in education from Harvard Graduate School of Education, a master's in special education from Hunter College, and a master's in social work from the University of MI.

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

Reader's Score: 2

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Competitive Preference Priority 1

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

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.

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

Please specify whether they meet (a) or (b) and clearly explain why in the strengths.

(0 or 1 points)

Strengths:

The applicant meets b. They explain that under Maryland's Public Charter School Law (Annotated Code MD, Education Article § 9-101, et seq), LEA Boards of Education are the sole authorizers of public schools in the state. If an applicant is denied by an LEA, there is a process to appeal to the State Board of Education. The State Board will either uphold the denial, direct the LEA to grant the charter, or remand the decision back for reconsideration. The applicant demonstrates how the process has been enacted by providing the following statistics: since the MD's charter school law passed, the State Board ruled on 34 appeals from 29 unique schools. In twelve of the appeals, the Board ruled in favor of the applicant. In eight cases, schools obtained charters and in three cases, the State Board directed the LEA to issue a charter. Two schools that won appeals were recent CSP subgrantees (e700 or page 55). This provides evidence that although the State Board of Education does not authorize school directly, they have the power to approve the charter application over the objections of the LEA.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. To be eligible to receive points under this priority, a State entity must demonstrate that it is located in a state that 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 states that MD Law provides funding to the state's public charter schools "commensurate with that expended on behalf of traditional public schools (e70 or page 55)." "Commensurate" implies that the amount and timeliness of state funding are equivalent. The applicant references the results of a school funding study showing "direct spending (the per pupil charter allocation) plus the value of LEA-provided services in the state's public charter schools was, in most cases, comparable to LEA's spending for traditional schools" (e71 or page 56).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Competitive Preference Priority 3

- 1. To be eligible to receive points under this priority, a State entity must demonstrate that it is located in a state that uses best practices from charter schools to help improve struggling schools and LEAs.**

(up to 2 points)

Strengths:

Eight public charter schools in Baltimore were converted from struggling traditional schools to improve student performance (e71 or page 56). MAPCS disseminates information and resources to promote improved practices by providing best practice resources to schools and providing opportunities to learn from other public charter schools through the School-to-School Sharing program (schools receive stipends to share their best practices on topics identified through the 2019 Needs Analysis (e71 or page 56). Two charter schools received grants to bring teacher teams from both charter and district schools together for shared professional development (page 8). MAPCS held a free, virtual public charter school conference in 2022, open to all, posted innovative program information on their website, and disseminated a Promising Practices Publication (Appendix F., e 400).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not provide specific detail or evidence on how best practices in charter schools are used to improve struggling schools and LEAs, such as the name of the schools worked with, and student learning impacts made.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority 4 - Competitive Preference Priority 4

- 1. To be eligible to receive points under this priority, a State entity must demonstrate that it is located in a State that 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**
- f) Low- or no-cost leasing privileges**

(up to 2 points)

Strengths:

The applicant states that under Maryland law, LEAs are required to offer surplus buildings to public charter school operators. They explain that in Baltimore City Schools, eight public charter school conversions have been authorized, with negotiated rents generally below market values. Five public charter schools lease buildings from either City Schools or Baltimore City government. In three cases, City Schools' public charter schools have purchased surplus buildings from Baltimore City government at below-market rates. Outside of Baltimore, there is one conversion public charter schools and two schools that lease from LEAs at low-cost rates. Several public charter schools have received bond financing through the MD Health and Higher Education Facilities Authority. Any portion of a building or property occupied and used by a Maryland public charter school is exempt from property taxes for the duration of its occupation and use as a public charter school. (e71-2 or pages 56-57). These examples meet criteria b) assistance with facilities acquisition, c) access to public facilities, d) the ability to share in bonds or mill levies, and f) low-or-no cost leasing privileges.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority 5 - Competitive Preference Priority 5

- 1. To be eligible to receive points under this priority, a State entity must demonstrate that 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:

In this project, MAPCS will manage the CSP grant, which focuses on supporting public charter schools that serve underserved students. Supports for underserved students include 1) a competitive priority given to subgrant applicants with innovative and diverse educational models in the two districts where schools are identified for comprehensive or targeted school improvement, 2) targeted outreach efforts directed toward the nine PCSs that offer high school grades, encouraging them to submit expansion applications, and 3) technical assistance activities focusing on dropout prevention, dropout recovery, and comprehensive career counseling. Subgrant applicants will be required to provide a description of how their program addresses the needs of educationally underserved students. During the capacity interview, special attention will be given to discussing this aspect. Lastly, technical assistance will be provided to public charter school developers, helping them understand the provisions of MD's charter law (Md. Educ. Art. 9-102). This includes guidance on serving all students and utilizing weighted lotteries, which can provide slightly greater admission chances to students from underserved groups (e71-2 or pages 57-58).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

Reader's Score: 3

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