

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/27/2016 05:08 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Georgia Department of Education (U282A160016)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Educationally Disadvantaged Students		
1. Ed. Dis. Students	15	13
Vision for Growth and Accountability		
1. Growth and Accountability	10	7
Past Performance		
1. Past Performance	15	5
Project Design		
1. Project Design	20	17
Dissemination of Information and Best Practices		
1. Dissemination	10	10
Oversight of Authorized Public Chartering Agencies		
1. Oversight of Authorizers	25	18
Policy Context for Charter Schools		
1. Policy Context	5	3
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
High-Quality Authorizing and Monitoring Processes		
1. CPP 1a	5	5
2. CPP 1b	5	5
3. CPP 1c	5	4
Authorizer other than LEA or Appeals Process		
1. CPP 2	5	5
Total	120	92

Technical Review Form

Panel #12 - State Educational Agencies - 12: 84.282A

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Georgia Department of Education (U282A160016)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Educationally Disadvantaged Students

1. **The Secretary considers the contribution that the charter schools grant program will make to assisting educationally disadvantaged and other students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.**

Strengths:

(p .16) The applicant cites the demographics of the 2014-15 charter school population. Most relevant to this criteria of assisting educationally disadvantaged students in meeting State academic and content standards and State student achievement were the higher percentages of students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged students that are being served in Georgia charter schools relative to traditional Georgia public schools.

In 2015, Georgia passed a law allowing charter schools to provide educationally disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, limited English proficient students, neglected or delinquent, and homeless additional weight in lotteries. (p. 17) This is supportive of the Secretary's priority of assisting educationally disadvantaged students.

(p. 17) To support the criteria of assisting educationally disadvantaged students, the SEA's CSP subgrant competition will award 10 additional points to school with models and practices that focus on educationally disadvantaged students and these schools will be funded at higher levels.

GaDOE will use dissemination grants (three per year) to further best practices of schools with success in serving economically disadvantaged students and students with disabilities.

Charters have not been renewed because the school's student population was not representative of its attendance zone. (p. 18)

(p. 19) In future subgrant competitions GaDOE will ensure that applicants are considering their students transportation needs and GaDOE will use their annual facility grant to address transportation infrastructure costs, such as purchasing buses.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not present data to confirm the academic achievement of educationally disadvantaged students and other students in charter schools in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Vision for Growth and Accountability

1. **The Secretary determines the quality of the statewide vision, including the role of the SEA, for charter school growth and accountability. In determining the quality of the statewide vision, the Secretary**

considers the following factors:

- 1) The ambitiousness, quality of vision, and feasibility of the SEA's plan (including key actions) to support the creation of high-quality charter schools during the project period, including a reasonable estimate of the number of high-quality charter schools in the State at both the beginning and the end of the project period; and
- 2) The ambitiousness, quality of vision, and feasibility of the SEA's plan (including key actions) to support the closure of academically poor-performing charter schools in the State (i.e., through revocation, non-renewal, or voluntary termination of a charter) during the project period.

Strengths:

p 21 Over next five years GaDOE predicts charter school growth of 8, 18 and 28. This is ambitious given that the net growth in charter schools has slowed in Georgia over the past four years. Page 22 shows that in 2015-2016 Georgia had a net loss in charter schools of 11 schools. These estimates are based on history of SCS and State Board approving approximately four schools a year and the creation of the Opportunity School District in the 2017-2018 year which aims to take 20 lowest performing traditional schools and turning them into charter schools.

The applicant also cited partnering with Georgia Charter Schools Association, GCSA's Board Bank, Charter Start program and new charter school incubator, New Schools for Georgia to support its estimate of growth. The applicant also seeks waiver for expansion of highly successful schools. P 23.

Page 24 cites data on petition denials citing an extremely stringent approval process. P 26 The Applicant describes the process for putting schools on probation developed in the 2015-2016 year. This is the approach the applicant takes to this part of this criteria.

Weaknesses:

The application does not specifically address closing poor performing schools except through the probation and non renewal process.

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - Past Performance

1. The Secretary considers the past performance of charter schools in a State that enacted a charter school law for the first time five or more years before submission of its application. In determining the past performance of charter schools in such a State, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- 1) The extent to which there has been a demonstrated increase, for each of the past five years, in the number and percentage of high-quality charter schools (as defined in this notice) in the State; and

- 2) The extent to which there has been a demonstrated reduction, for each of the past five years, in the number and percentage of academically poor-performing charter schools (as defined in this notice) in the State.

Strengths:

p 28 (charts) The applicants used 2015 CRCT test results to show the percent of students scoring at or above state targets. CSP recipient charter school students outperformed other charter students and all GA school students. Enrollment in Georgia charter schools has doubled over the past five years.

p 27 The applicant points to the relatively stable number of charter schools as evidence of the state's work to replicate successful schools and close poorly performing schools. P 29 Georgia has not renewed low performing closing schools. Nine charters were terminated in 2014-2015 school year. During 2013-14, 5 charter schools were closed. Graph provided on page 21.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not provide an increase for each of the past five years in the number and percentage of high quality charter schools in the State. Nor did the applicant provide a decrease for each of the past five years in the number of poorly-performing charter schools in the state.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the SEA's charter school subgrant program, including the extent to which the project design furthers the SEA's overall strategy for increasing the number of high-quality charter schools in the State and improving student academic achievement. In determining the quality of the project design, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 17

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

pp 30,31 Applicant describes how subgrants will be announced, how the frameworks will be the basis of the application and rubric, who will serve in peer review process, training that will be provided to applicants and complete timelines for grant activities, specifically the subgranting process.

P 32 The applicant states that the same tiered review will be followed for the awarding of dissemination subgrants and substantial expansion grants. The scoring rubric and application for dissemination grants will specifically call for best practices that lead to academic success with academically disadvantaged students.

P 33 Chart shows projected number of subgrantees based on SCSC approvals in 2014-15 and anticipated activity based on new partnerships and the creation of the OSD.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address the percentage of eligible applicants that were awarded subgrants under previous CSP grants and how this percentage related to the overall quality of the applicant pool. The applicant does, however mention that GaDOE last had a CSSP grant in 2010.

Reader's Score: 9

2. 2) The process for monitoring CSP subgrantees.

Strengths:

P 41 The applicant commits to conduct at least one site visit for each charter school receiving a CSP grant during each year of the grant cycle. The subgrantees will know their status on compliance of performance in terms of the performance framework. Annually monitoring of subgrantees will include an evaluation of schools on multiple issues including implementing of research-based practices. The application included copies of monitoring instruments.

Weaknesses:

The monitoring of dissemination grants was not specifically addressed.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Dissemination of Information and Best Practices

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the SEA's plan to disseminate information about charter schools and best or promising practices of successful charter schools to each LEA in the State as well as to charter schools, other public schools, and charter school developers (20 U.S.C. 7221b(b)(2)(C) and 7221(c)(f)(6)). If an SEA proposes to use a portion of its grant funds for dissemination subgrants under section 5204(f)(6)(B) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 7221c(f)(6)(B)), the SEA should incorporate these subgrants into the overall plan for dissemination. In determining the quality of the SEA's plan to disseminate information about charter schools and best or promising practices of successful charter schools, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 10

Sub Question

- 1. 1) The extent to which the SEA will serve as a leader in the State for identifying and disseminating information and research (which may include, but is not limited to, providing technical assistance) about best or promising practices in successful charter schools, including how the SEA will use measures of efficacy and data in identifying such practices and assessing the impact of its dissemination activities.**

Strengths:

p 42 State partnered with REL-SE Regional Educational Lab Southeast to determine the practices that correlate with beating the odds. SCSC also partnered with Vanderbilt to determine the best practices for starting a strong charter school. GaDOE disseminated the research at a statewide conference in March 2016. SCSC has conducted 15 trainings for existing charter schools and 6 training for new charter petitioners. Numerous other trainings are outlined in the application page 43. supporting the claim that the SEA has already established itself as a leader for identifying and disseminating information and research about best or promising practices. The applicant proposes to create an interactive website for on-line access to schools that are experiencing success with

Sub Question

implementing best practices. Trainings, materials and videos will be available.
P 44 GaDOE will continue to publish and disseminate a charter School Annual Report.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were identified.

Reader's Score: 7

2. 2) The quality of the SEA's plan for disseminating information and research on best or promising practices in charter schools related to student discipline and school climate.

Strengths:

GaDoe will use its dissemination grants to bring additional focus to charter schools working with educationally disadvantaged students. Two grants will be awarded to two charter schools that are very successful in working with educationally disadvantaged students in urban and rural context. A third will be awarded to a charter school demonstrating success with another sub-group that meets the definition of educationally disadvantaged. Planning and Implementation subgrant applicants will be awarded additional points for charter schools working with educationally disadvantaged students.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were identified.

Reader's Score: 3

Selection Criteria - Oversight of Authorized Public Chartering Agencies

Reader's Score: 18

Sub Question

1. 1) The Secretary considers the quality of the SEA's plan (including any use of grant administrative or other funds) to monitor, evaluate, assist, and hold accountable authorized public chartering agencies. In determining the quality of the SEA's plan to provide oversight to authorized public chartering agencies, the Secretary considers how well the SEA's plan will ensure that authorized public chartering agencies are ?

a. Approving charter school petitions with design elements that incorporate evidence-based school models and practices, including, but not limited to, school models and practices that focus on racial and ethnic diversity in student bodies and diversity in student bodies with respect to educationally disadvantaged students, consistent with applicable law;

b. Establishing measurable academic and operational performance expectations for all charter schools (including alternative charter schools, virtual charter schools, and charter schools that include pre-kindergarten, if such schools exist in the State) that are consistent with the definition of high-quality charter school as defined in this notice;

c. Providing, on an annual basis, public reports on the performance of their portfolios of charter

Sub Question

schools, including the performance of each individual charter school with respect to meeting the terms of, and expectations set forth in, the school's charter or performance contract; and

d. Supporting charter school autonomy while holding charter schools accountable for results and meeting the terms of their charters or performance contracts.

Strengths:

(a) p. 47,48) The application describes the two tiered process for both LEA authorized and SCSC authorized charter schools. To ensure local authorizers approve schools with evidence-based school models, GaDOE has ongoing conversations and provides feedback on authorizer policies to ensure a uniform application of SBOE rules and authorizer best practice. If a local district board is not accurately applying the framework, including demonstration of evidence based models, the framework is applied at the GaDOE and SBOE level.

(b) (p 49) GaDOE will roll out its authorizer evaluation tool in connection with NACSA. SCSC engaged NACSA to conduct an authorizer evaluation of its policies and practices.

(c) (p 51) State Board Rule requires local authorizers to annually report to the State Board and post on its web site a report that include progress on academic goals set forth in the charter for each individual charter school in the authorizer's portfolio. The SCSC also conducts its own annual report and annual audit with its schools.

(d) (p. 52) State law holds authorizers responsible for ensuring that charter schools have maximum flexibility. This is clarified in SBOE rule. Charter schools are required to report on their interactions and autonomy from local authorizers in their annual reports.

Weaknesses:

The application does not address how the SCSC is monitored and held accountable while student achievement data provided on p. e227-234 show that the SCSC authorized schools are showing student achievement that is lower than other charters in the state.

Reader's Score: 15

2. 2) The Secretary considers the quality of the SEA's plan (including any use of grant administrative or other funds) to monitor, evaluate, assist, and hold accountable authorized public chartering agencies. In determining the quality of the SEA's plan to provide oversight to authorized public chartering agencies, the Secretary considers how well the SEA's plan will ensure that authorized public chartering agencies are --

a. Seeking and approving charter school petitions from developers that have the capacity to create charter schools that can become high-quality charter schools;

b. Monitoring their charter schools on at least an annual basis, including conducting an in-depth review of each charter school at least once every five years, to ensure that charter schools are meeting the terms of their charter or performance contracts and complying with applicable State and Federal laws;

c. Using increases in student academic achievement as one of the most important factors in renewal decisions; basing renewal decisions on a comprehensive set of criteria, which are set forth in the charter or performance contract; and revoking, not renewing, or encouraging the voluntary termination of charters held by academically poor-performing charter schools;

d. Ensuring the continued accountability of charter schools during any transition to new State assessments or accountability systems, including those based on college- and career-ready standards.

Sub Question

Strengths:

- (a) (p. 53) Applicant cites the work it has begun with its partners to identify highest achieving charter developers and identify the potential of those providers succeeding in Georgia. Applicant cites work already begun by OSD to work with Building Excellent Schools and the efforts of the GCSA to develop seven charter proposals to seek approval from OSD in 2017
- (b) Local authorizers are required to annually monitor their charter schools and report their findings to the State board and the local community. P 54 details all required district monitoring.
- (c) (p. 56) Both SCSC and GaDOE use a performance framework to make approval and renewal decisions. Academic performance is the most important factor when making renewal decisions and given the highest number of points. All Georgia charter schools are required to "Beat the Odds" and exceed district and state averages on the CCRPI during each year of its charter term in order to be renewed.
- (d) p 57 Each year GaDOE releases guidance and has trainings on changes to the CCRPI which is the index model used to determine schools' academic achievement.

Weaknesses:

The application does not address how the SCSC is monitored and held accountable while student achievement data provided on p. e227-234 show that the SCSC authorized schools are showing student achievement that is lower than other charters in the state.

Reader's Score: 3

Selection Criteria - Policy Context for Charter Schools

1. The Secretary considers the policy context for charter schools under the proposed project. In determining the policy context for charter schools under the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- 1) The degree of flexibility afforded to charter schools under the State's charter school law, including:**
 - i. The extent to which charter schools in the State are exempt from State or local rules that inhibit the flexible operation and management of public schools; and**
 - ii. The extent to which charter schools in the State have a high degree of autonomy, including autonomy over the charter school's budget, expenditures, staffing, procurement, and curriculum; and**

2) The quality of the SEA's plan to ensure that charter schools that are considered to be LEA's under State law and LEA's in which charter schools are located will comply with sections 613(a)(5) and 613(e)(1)(B) of IDEA (20 U.S.C. 1400, et seq.), the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (42 U.S.C. 6101, et seq.), title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d, et seq.), title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. 1681, et seq.), and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794).

Strengths:

p58 Only State charter schools authorized by the SCSC are their own LEA. Currently there are 27. Georgia state policy supports charter by providing the maximum flexibility from state laws, ensuing equitable federal, state and local funding and supporting schools that operate as their own LEAs

p 59 For all charters in Georgia and LEAs in the districts, GaDoe insures compliance with federal laws, especially those related to students' rights. The High Quality Charter Schools Framework has a specific section related to students' rights including compliance with IDEA and Discrimination based on age, race, gender, color or national origin. These questions are part of year 2 and 4 reviews, application process and CSP monitoring document. GaDOE looks at data and requires proof of remedying concerns if they exist and ma place a charter school on probation or termination. In the past year GaDOE has delayed renewing two schools for concerns related to civil rights.

Weaknesses:

Applicant does not address flexibility of LEA authorized charter schools

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - High-Quality Authorizing and Monitoring Processes

1. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that all authorized public chartering agencies in the State use one or more of the following:

a) Authorizing processes that establish clear criteria for evaluating charter applications and include a multi-tiered clearance or review of a charter school, including a final review immediately before the school opens for its first operational year.

Strengths:

p 8 Georgia has a two tier process. Charter applicants must first apply to the local district and be approved. This involves an application review, site visit and panel interview using the performance framework. Applicants must then apply to SBOE and applications are reviewed by GaDOE. The charter schools governing board viewed by a panel interview of SCSC staff and external charter experts and go before the SBOE. The final step is an appearance before the SBOE charter subcommittee.

Charter Application incorporates the multi-factored performance framework detailed on pages 8 and 9. The framework is the basis of the initial application, renewal application, application rubrics and pre-opening checklist.

Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 5

2. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that all authorized public chartering agencies in the State use one or more of the following:

b) Authorizing processes that include differentiated review of charter petitions to assess whether, and the extent to which, the charter school developer has been successful (as determined by the authorized public chartering agency) in establishing and operating one or more high-quality charter schools.

Strengths:

Georgia has a fast track expansion model for schools that have demonstrated significant success. In this case approval can be finalized in as little as one month's time if a petitioner demonstrates near-perfect quality and compliance during the review. Highly successful authorizers can also open more than one school under a single contract.

Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 5

3. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that all authorized public chartering agencies in the State use one or more of the following:

c) Clear and specific standards and formalized processes that measure and benchmark the performance of the authorized public chartering agency or agencies, including the performance of its portfolio of charter schools, and provide for the annual dissemination of information on such performance.

Strengths:

p 13 Rules and guidance enacted in 2014 allow greater monitoring of local boards of education by measuring and benchmarking boards of education and their portfolio of charter schools. The rule requires GaDOE to hold local boards of education accountable for their responsibilities to charter schools.

With CSP funds GaDoe has plans to partner with NACSA to strengthen the quality of authorizing practices by developing an evaluation framework that will allow for the evaluation of authorizers

Weaknesses:

No detail was provided mechanisms to measure the performance of the SCSC.

Reader's Score: 4

Competitive Preference Priority - Authorizer other than LEA or Appeals Process

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

a) Provides for one authorized public chartering agency that is not an LEA, such as a State chartering board, for each individual or entity seeking to operate a charter school pursuant to State law; or

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

Strengths:

p 14 In 2012 a constitutional amendment was passed to establish again the State Charter Schools Commission (SCSC) with chartering authority.

Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 5

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Applicant: Georgia Department of Education (U282A160016)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Educationally Disadvantaged Students		
1. Ed. Dis. Students	15	15
Vision for Growth and Accountability		
1. Growth and Accountability	10	5
Past Performance		
1. Past Performance	15	4
Project Design		
1. Project Design	20	17
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1. Dissemination	10	10
Oversight of Authorized Public Chartering Agencies		
1. Oversight of Authorizers	25	18
Policy Context for Charter Schools		
1. Policy Context	5	5
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
High-Quality Authorizing and Monitoring Processes		
1. CPP 1a	5	3
2. CPP 1b	5	2
3. CPP 1c	5	3
Authorizer other than LEA or Appeals Process		
1. CPP 2	5	5
Total	120	87

Technical Review Form

Panel #12 - State Educational Agencies - 12: 84.282A

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Georgia Department of Education (U282A160016)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Educationally Disadvantaged Students

1. The Secretary considers the contribution that the charter schools grant program will make to assisting educationally disadvantaged and other students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.

Strengths:

The SEA has a focused, strong, and comprehensive plan for how its charter school program will assist educationally disadvantaged students meet standards in the state. The plan is multi-faceted and includes a focus on recruiting experienced charter school applicants in targeted areas; removing student access barriers through techniques such as weighted lotteries; providing incentives to serve this population; and providing training. The SEA should be commended for its well-thought out and detailed approach. (pgs. 16-22).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Vision for Growth and Accountability

1. The Secretary determines the quality of the statewide vision, including the role of the SEA, for charter school growth and accountability. In determining the quality of the statewide vision, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The ambitiousness, quality of vision, and feasibility of the SEA's plan (including key actions) to support the creation of high-quality charter schools during the project period, including a reasonable estimate of the number of high-quality charter schools in the State at both the beginning and the end of the project period; and

2) The ambitiousness, quality of vision, and feasibility of the SEA's plan (including key actions) to support the closure of academically poor-performing charter schools in the State (i.e., through revocation, non-renewal, or voluntary termination of a charter) during the project period.

Strengths:

Factor 1

The SEA articulated a clear and compelling vision for how it proposes to support the creation of high-quality charter schools during its project period. This plan includes closing low performing schools, opening new schools that must pass a rigorous application process, and closely monitoring the performance of its schools.

The SEA's rationale for its estimate of the number of high quality schools it will open is sound. It is based on historical data and the fact that plans are already in place to convert several low performing traditional public schools to charter schools (pg. 21).

Factor 2

The SEA effectively demonstrated its willingness to act to close charters. Although the number of schools actually closed is unclear (pages 29 and 22 have different numbers) there is sufficient evidence to support the claim that schools have been closed.

Weaknesses:

Factor 1

While the SEA's vision is compelling, it is not clear that it is actually implementing this vision. The SEA says that it uses the federal definition of high-quality (pg 23), but failed to indicate what percentage of its schools are currently high-quality.

Factor 2

While the SEA has closed schools, the SEA did not explicitly state that these schools were terminated or not-renewed for poor academic performance. There are other reasons for charter termination and as such this assumption cannot be made.

The SEA also does not yet have a systematic process for closing schools. It states it is "ramping up its probation process" (pg. 29) which will lead to termination if improvements do not occur. The SEA also did not describe its school dissolution plan.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Past Performance

1. The Secretary considers the past performance of charter schools in a State that enacted a charter school law for the first time five or more years before submission of its application. In determining the past performance of charter schools in such a State, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The extent to which there has been a demonstrated increase, for each of the past five years, in the number and percentage of high-quality charter schools (as defined in this notice) in the State; and

2) The extent to which there has been a demonstrated reduction, for each of the past five years, in the number and percentage of academically poor-performing charter schools (as defined in this notice) in the State.

Strengths:

Factor 1

The SEA demonstrated it is committed to increasing the number of seats in high-quality schools (pg. 26).

Factor 2

The SEA demonstrated that it has the authority and will to close charter schools (pg. 29).

Weaknesses:

Factor 1

The SEA did not provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that for each of the past 5 years the number of high-quality charter schools has increased. The number of charter schools has increased by 5 schools (pg. 26), while the number of charter school students has increased by 55% (pg. 26). However, there is no information that details what number or percentage of this growth is accounted for in high-quality charter schools as required in the notice.

Factor 2

While the SEA has closed charter schools, there is insufficient evidence to assume that these schools were closed because they were academically poor-performing.

Reader's Score: 4

Selection Criteria - Project Design

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the SEA's charter school subgrant program, including the extent to which the project design furthers the SEA's overall strategy for increasing the number of high-quality charter schools in the State and improving student academic achievement. In determining the quality of the project design, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 17

Sub Question

- 1. 1) The quality of the SEA's process for awarding subgrants for planning, program design, and initial implementation and, if applicable, for dissemination, including --**

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

ii. A reasonable year-by-year estimate, with supporting evidence, of

a) the number of subgrants the SEA expects to award during the project period and the average size of those subgrants, including an explanation of any assumptions upon which the estimates are based; and

b) if the SEA has previously received a CSP grant, the percentage of eligible applicants that were awarded subgrants and how this percentage related to the overall quality of the applicant pool.

Strengths:

The timeline and peer-review process for awarding subgrants is clear and reasonable. Subgrant applicants have 30 days to submit an application (February), and are notified of award in April. Key elements of a rigorous and fair application process are also evident (e.g., application webinar, issuing of call for reviewers, and training of reviewers) (pgs. 34-35). The SEA's competitive process which limits funding to highly scored subgrant applicants that have already completed a rigorous charter application process should ensure the creation of high-quality charter schools.

The SEA provided copies of its Planning and Implementation application and Dissemination application. Both applications are of high quality – clearly delineating evaluation and eligibility criteria. The dissemination applicants must be “considered high quality by demonstrating academic success as specified in the CSP grant notice.” (pg. e32).

The SEA presented a clear and convincing justification for its tiered approach to funding its subgrants. The fact that this tiered approach is tied to its focus on educationally disadvantaged students, and also tied to the authorizing model is impressive (pg. 34)

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

The SEA's description of who will receive these grants is somewhat unclear. The SEA states that it will only fund a portion of applicants eligible for the grants to ensure that there is "true competition" (pg. 34). However, the SEA appears to be requesting funding to support all of the charter applications it anticipates approving.

The actual number of subgrants the SEA intends to fund is not immediately clear. There is a slight discrepancy in the numbers reported in the table on pg. 22 (116) and the table on pg.33 (113). It is clear, however, that the SEA plans to fund 9 dissemination grants.

The SEA did not respond to part (1)(ii)(b) of this requirement – it did not report the percentage of eligible applicants awarded subgrants and how this percentage related to the overall quality of the applicant pool.

Reader's Score: 7

2. 2) The process for monitoring CSP subgrantees.

Strengths:

The SEA states that subgrantees "will be monitored in person, on-site using the monitoring tool annually."(pg. 41) The monitoring tool is detailed and comprehensive, addressing all key areas of compliance. The SEA also requires subgrants to report every 6 months on project goals.

The SEA's monitoring processes should result in early identification of subgrant challenges and foster effective resolution of challenges identified.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Dissemination of Information and Best Practices

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the SEA's plan to disseminate information about charter schools and best or promising practices of successful charter schools to each LEA in the State as well as to charter schools, other public schools, and charter school developers (20 U.S.C. 7221b(b)(2)(C) and 7221(c)(f)(6)). If an SEA proposes to use a portion of its grant funds for dissemination subgrants under section 5204(f)(6)(B) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 7221c(f)(6)(B)), the SEA should incorporate these subgrants into the overall plan for dissemination. In determining the quality of the SEA's plan to disseminate information about charter schools and best or promising practices of successful charter schools, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 10

Sub Question

- 1. 1) The extent to which the SEA will serve as a leader in the State for identifying and disseminating information and research (which may include, but is not limited to, providing technical assistance) about best or promising practices in successful charter schools, including how the SEA will use**

Sub Question

measures of efficacy and data in identifying such practices and assessing the impact of its dissemination activities.

Strengths:

The SEA provided clear and convincing evidence that it serves as a leader in the State for identifying and disseminating information and research on promising practices and assessing the impact of those practices. Impressively, the SEA has partnered with reputable organizations to help it identify and study best practices. It also has created intentional opportunities to disseminate findings, including web-based trainings, in-person trainings, and conferences that will be open to all schools, LEAs, and community stakeholders. (pg. 42-43)

The SEA plans to expand its reach by building an interactive website to house and share resources (pg. 43). This plan is an innovative way to encourage and foster collaboration among charter schools.

The SEA has a well-thought out and rigorous plan to assess the impact of its dissemination activities, including contracting with an organization to assess its impact, and surveying participants to understand which practices they will put in practice (pg. 47). This approach should yield valuable information the SEA, and be generally useful to other organizations involved in dissemination efforts.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified

Reader's Score: 7

2. 2) The quality of the SEA's plan for disseminating information and research on best or promising practices in charter schools related to student discipline and school climate.

Strengths:

The SEA described a highly strategic approach to disseminating information and research on best or promising practices related to school discipline and climate. Notably, the SEA will partner with the Governor's Office of Student Achievement to further its effort in this area (pg. 45). The SEA's willingness to collaborate with other departments to extend its own impact shows its capacity for innovative and big-picture thinking. The SEA proposes to also publish school discipline and culture ratings to increase awareness, and continue to support the implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.

The SEA's plan to evaluate the effectiveness of its dissemination grants (pg.47) is also compelling. As a part of this activity it states that it will "track student performance data for schools that are implementing a charter schools best practice or dissemination grant focus." This is often a missing piece in evaluating the impact of dissemination activities, and so the SEA's focus on this area is commendable.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified

Reader's Score: 3

Selection Criteria - Oversight of Authorized Public Chartering Agencies

Sub Question

1. 1) The Secretary considers the quality of the SEA's plan (including any use of grant administrative or other funds) to monitor, evaluate, assist, and hold accountable authorized public chartering agencies. In determining the quality of the SEA's plan to provide oversight to authorized public chartering agencies, the Secretary considers how well the SEA's plan will ensure that authorized public chartering agencies are ?

a. Approving charter school petitions with design elements that incorporate evidence-based school models and practices, including, but not limited to, school models and practices that focus on racial and ethnic diversity in student bodies and diversity in student bodies with respect to educationally disadvantaged students, consistent with applicable law;

b. Establishing measurable academic and operational performance expectations for all charter schools (including alternative charter schools, virtual charter schools, and charter schools that include pre-kindergarten, if such schools exist in the State) that are consistent with the definition of high-quality charter school as defined in this notice;

c. Providing, on an annual basis, public reports on the performance of their portfolios of charter schools, including the performance of each individual charter school with respect to meeting the terms of, and expectations set forth in, the school's charter or performance contract; and

d. Supporting charter school autonomy while holding charter schools accountable for results and meeting the terms of their charters or performance contracts.

Strengths:

The SEA has a reasonable approach for ensuring that its authorizers approve charter petitions with evidence-based models that support educationally disadvantaged students – it reviews all applications approved by its authorizers and gives final approval. In these applications petitioners must discuss how they plan to serve this population.

The SEA has a reasonable approach for ensuring that its LEA authorizers establish measurable academic and operational performance expectations that are consistent with the definition of high-quality charter schools. The SEA has created a strong framework against which schools are evaluated. If a LEA authorizer does not apply the framework to any of the schools it authorizes, the SEA will apply the framework instead (pg. 51).

The SEA has a strong role in ensuring that local authorizers submit public reports on an annual basis on the performance of their portfolio of charter schools. This requirement appears to be codified in law.

The SEA has a strong role in ensuring that local authorizers support charter school autonomy. The SEA's approach is unique – it “requires local charter schools to report on their interactions and autonomy from local authorizers in their annual reports.” (pg. 52)

While the SEA does not have strong systems in place for overseeing its authorizers, it is aware of this problem and proposes to work with NACSA to develop an authorizer evaluation framework. The SEA's approach to addressing this deficiency is commendable. (pg. 49 -50) This framework when completed should be applied to all authorizers – local and state.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

The SEA did not provide a clear response as to how it reviews for design elements that focus on racial and ethnic diversity in student bodies.

The SEA does not seem to have a role in ensuring the SCSC establishes measurable academic and operational expectations that are consistent with the definition of high-quality charter schools. While the SEA reports that the SCSC does have such a framework, the SEA has no role in ensuring the use of the framework.

The SEA does not seem to have a role in ensuring the SCSC produces public annual reports on its portfolio of schools. It states that the SCSC is “an independent agency that conducts its own annual report process and annual audit process with its schools” (pg. 51).

The SEA does not seem to have role in ensuring that the SCSC supports charter school autonomy.

Overall, while the SEA has strong oversight of its LEA authorizers, it does not have oversight of its state authorizer – the SCSC. Because the focus of this factor is on authorizer oversight, this is considered a significant weakness.

Reader's Score: 15

2. 2) The Secretary considers the quality of the SEA’s plan (including any use of grant administrative or other funds) to monitor, evaluate, assist, and hold accountable authorized public chartering agencies. In determining the quality of the SEA’s plan to provide oversight to authorized public chartering agencies, the Secretary considers how well the SEA’s plan will ensure that authorized public chartering agencies are --

a. Seeking and approving charter school petitions from developers that have the capacity to create charter schools that can become high-quality charter schools;

b. Monitoring their charter schools on at least an annual basis, including conducting an in-depth review of each charter school at least once every five years, to ensure that charter schools are meeting the terms of their charter or performance contracts and complying with applicable State and Federal laws;

c. Using increases in student academic achievement as one of the most important factors in renewal decisions; basing renewal decisions on a comprehensive set of criteria, which are set forth in the charter or performance contract; and revoking, not renewing, or encouraging the voluntary termination of charters held by academically poor-performing charter schools;

d. Ensuring the continued accountability of charter schools during any transition to new State assessments or accountability systems, including those based on college- and career-ready standards.

Strengths:

The SEA’s close monitoring of the applications approved by its authorizers should result in the creation of high-quality charter schools. This is a fairly reasonable approach to ensuring developers with the capacity to create high-quality charters are approved.

The SEA has a well-developed approach to engage LEA authorizers in monitoring their schools annually and conducting in-depth reviews prior to renewal. Not only will the local authorizers report on their findings annually, but they will be evaluated on their monitoring processes as a part of the NACSA evaluation that is being developed. (pgs. 54 and 55).

The SEA’s close monitoring of the renewal applications submitted by charter applicants to their authorizer (local and the SCSC) should ensure that the SEA’s decision to use academic achievement as one of the most important

Sub Question

factors in renewal decisions is implemented (pg. 56).

The SEA has a significant role in ensuring its LEA authorizers continue to hold schools accountable during transition. These authorizers will continue to use the performance framework developed by the SEA. The framework is not affected by transitions in state assessments.

Weaknesses:

The SEA does not appear to have a role in ensuring the SCSC monitors its portfolio of schools.

The SEA does not appear to have a strong role in ensuring the SCSC continues to hold its schools accountable during transition. The SEA does not seem to have any oversight responsibility for the SCSC. It is not clear how the performance of the SCSC is monitored.

Overall, while the SEA has strong oversight of its LEA authorizers, it does not have oversight of its state authorizer – the SCSC. Because the focus of this factor is on authorizer oversight, this is considered a significant weakness.

Reader's Score: 3

Selection Criteria - Policy Context for Charter Schools

1. The Secretary considers the policy context for charter schools under the proposed project. In determining the policy context for charter schools under the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The degree of flexibility afforded to charter schools under the State's charter school law, including:

i. The extent to which charter schools in the State are exempt from State or local rules that inhibit the flexible operation and management of public schools; and

ii. The extent to which charter schools in the State have a high degree of autonomy, including autonomy over the charter school's budget, expenditures, staffing, procurement, and curriculum; and

2) The quality of the SEA's plan to ensure that charter schools that are considered to be LEA's under State law and LEA's in which charter schools are located will comply with sections 613(a)(5) and 613(e)(1)(B) of IDEA (20 U.S.C. 1400, et seq.), the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (42 U.S.C. 6101, et seq.), title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d, et seq.), title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. 1681, et seq.), and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794).

Strengths:

Factor 1

The SEA adequately documented that the state charter law offers charter schools significant "control over their budgets, expenditures, staffing, procurement, and curriculum." (pg. 58) These autonomies are codified in state law.

Factor 2

Charter schools authorized by the state and SCSC are considered LEAs. The SEA documented a reasonable approach to monitoring compliance with applicable federal laws - through its "year 2 and 4 reviews, application process, and CSP monitoring document." (pg. 59)

Weaknesses:

Factor 1

While schools are offered significant control, they are not exempt from contributing to the state Teacher Retirement

System or from using the state teacher and leader evaluation system (pg. e136).

Factor 2

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - High-Quality Authorizing and Monitoring Processes

1. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that all authorized public chartering agencies in the State use one or more of the following:

a) Authorizing processes that establish clear criteria for evaluating charter applications and include a multi-tiered clearance or review of a charter school, including a final review immediately before the school opens for its first operational year.

Strengths:

Charter applicants have three application routes available to them: (1) local board approval followed by state board approval; (2) state charter schools commission (SCSC) approval followed by board approval; or (3) state board approval. Each application route is multi-tiered including elements such as site visits, panel interviews, and legal compliance reviews. (pg. 8, 10).

Prior to receiving permission to open, the applicant must complete a pre-opening checklist (pg.12). The checklist is well-developed and detailed and should result in schools having all needed facilities and processes in place in time for opening.

Weaknesses:

The SEA did not include criteria for how charter applications would be evaluated. It also did not describe the criteria that would be used by its LEA authorizers or by the SCSC in evaluating the applications they receive.

Reader's Score: 3

2. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that all authorized public chartering agencies in the State use one or more of the following:

b) Authorizing processes that include differentiated review of charter petitions to assess whether, and the extent to which, the charter school developer has been successful (as determined by the authorized public chartering agency) in establishing and operating one or more high-quality charter schools.

Strengths:

The SEA has a fast track process to expedite reviews of "highly successful charters" (pg. 13).

Weaknesses:

While the SEA reports that it has a fast track process to expedite reviews of “highly successful charters” (pg. 13), it failed to provide its definition of success. Additionally, the SEA did not demonstrate that it considers the past performance or success of applicants in making charter approval decisions.

Reader's Score: 2

3. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that all authorized public chartering agencies in the State use one or more of the following:

c) Clear and specific standards and formalized processes that measure and benchmark the performance of the authorized public chartering agency or agencies, including the performance of its portfolio of charter schools, and provide for the annual dissemination of information on such performance.

Strengths:

The grantee has a sound plan (working with NACSA) for developing standards and a formalized process for benchmarking the performance of its authorized public chartering agencies. (pg. 13) NACSA is a reputable organization with a long history of offering states this type of support, and so their assistance should prove valuable to the SEA.

Weaknesses:

While the SEA has a sound plan to put systems in place, these systems are not yet in place, and as a result the quality of the standards cannot be assessed.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority - Authorizer other than LEA or Appeals Process

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

a) Provides for one authorized public chartering agency that is not an LEA, such as a State chartering board, for each individual or entity seeking to operate a charter school pursuant to State law; or

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

Strengths:

The SEA meets part (a) of this priority. Two bodies other than LEAs can authorize charter schools, the SCSC and the State Board of Education (pgs 14-15).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 06/27/2016 05:08 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/27/2016 05:08 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Georgia Department of Education (U282A160016)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Educationally Disadvantaged Students		
1. Ed. Dis. Students	15	12
Vision for Growth and Accountability		
1. Growth and Accountability	10	7
Past Performance		
1. Past Performance	15	5
Project Design		
1. Project Design	20	18
Dissemination of Information and Best Practices		
1. Dissemination	10	7
Oversight of Authorized Public Chartering Agencies		
1. Oversight of Authorizers	25	16
Policy Context for Charter Schools		
1. Policy Context	5	5
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
High-Quality Authorizing and Monitoring Processes		
1. CPP 1a	5	4
2. CPP 1b	5	4
3. CPP 1c	5	2
Authorizer other than LEA or Appeals Process		
1. CPP 2	5	5
Total	120	85

Technical Review Form

Panel #12 - State Educational Agencies - 12: 84.282A

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Georgia Department of Education (U282A160016)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Educationally Disadvantaged Students

1. **The Secretary considers the contribution that the charter schools grant program will make to assisting educationally disadvantaged and other students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.**

Strengths:

p. 16 55% of students in Georgia charter public schools are from free/reduced price lunch families, almost double overall percentage in Georgia. Charters enroll slightly higher percentage of African American students and slightly lower percentage of Hispanic students, than traditional public schools. Charters enroll a similar percentage of students with some form of disability as do district public schools. This indicates that charters are attractive to a significant number of families that are educationally disadvantaged.

p. 17 Georgia has developed methods to assess school climate as a measure of school success. The proposal also indicates that Georgia offers the Positive Behavioral Intervention System at no cost to schools. This can help more students from disadvantaged communities succeed in school.

P 18 Georgia did not renew a charter because its student population was not representative of an attendance zone. This indicates a commitment to diversity.

p. 18 The proposal states that Georgia has several charter schools with a track record of success with educationally disadvantage students. During past grant cycles, Georgia has provided subgrants to four of these schools to share best practices in closing achievement gaps with neighboring traditional public schools. The proposal indicates that Georgia intends to do the same should this grant be awarded, thus potentially helping additional students not attending the high performing charters.

p. 19 The proposal states that Georgia law allows weighted lottery so students who are educationally disadvantaged have more opportunities to be admitted. This indicates an affirmative effort to enroll students from disadvantaged families. The proposal notes that two schools have used this.

Pp 19-20 Georgia plans to use "secret shopper" approach to determine schools attitudes toward students with disabilities. This indicates that Georgia is checking to determine whether charters truly are open to students with some form of disability.

The proposal states that demographics of Georgia charters reflect racial diversity of state's student body. The demographics also indicate that a significantly higher percentage of students in Georgia charter schools come from low income families. This indicates that helping more of these schools become high quality will help more educationally disadvantaged students meet state academic content and academic achievement standards.

Weaknesses:

p. 8 The proposal notes that "the academic performance requirements include charter schools exceeding CCRPI average for the state and their districts. The requirement to be above average may be difficult for some schools that serve mostly

or virtually all students with whom traditional schools have not succeeded to be renewed, even if they are showing steady improvement.

P 18 – The proposal provides no information about the impact that previous dissemination grants had on students in schools that received info or assistance from high quality schools.

The proposal contains no statement of support from charters doing an excellent job with students from disadvantaged communities. The proposal would be stronger with such statements, indicating a willingness to work with such students.

The proposal contains no description of how charters doing an excellent job with students from disadvantaged communities will work with lower performing schools. A detailed plan of technical assistance would strengthen the proposal.

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Vision for Growth and Accountability

1. The Secretary determines the quality of the statewide vision, including the role of the SEA, for charter school growth and accountability. In determining the quality of the statewide vision, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The ambitiousness, quality of vision, and feasibility of the SEA's plan (including key actions) to support the creation of high-quality charter schools during the project period, including a reasonable estimate of the number of high-quality charter schools in the State at both the beginning and the end of the project period; and

2) The ambitiousness, quality of vision, and feasibility of the SEA's plan (including key actions) to support the closure of academically poor-performing charter schools in the State (i.e., through revocation, non-renewal, or voluntary termination of a charter) during the project period.

Strengths:

Factor 1

p. 21: The proposal states that the state's vision is to help Georgia's future by "graduating students who are ready to learn, live and lead." This is ambitious and goes beyond what some states want public schools to do.

The proposal suggests ambitious goals of 16 implementation grants in fy 2016, 18 implementation grants in fy 2018, and 28 implementation grants in fy 2018. The proposal also includes three dissemination grants per year, along with planning grants (8 in fy 2016, 18 in fy 2017 and 28 in fy 2018). These are ambitious goals.

p. 22-23 – The proposal lists several steps that Georgia will take to increase the number of quality charter schools serving disadvantages communities. These include partnering with the Georgia Charter Schools Association to "encourage, promote and recruit educational leaders to start charter schools in high need communities", working with nationally successful charter management organizations to create greater interest in coming to Georgia, and a new charter schools incubator.

p. 23 Proposal states that Georgia will be "using the federal definition of high quality charter schools." It will identify schools that among other things have "high graduation rates for all students, increased student achievement and attainment including graduation rates, demonstrated success closing the achievement gap as measured by the College Career Readiness Index, and the schools results on its high quality charter schools performance framework. Proposal states that this "mirrors the federal definition and is incorporated into the performance frameworks used by both GaDOE and SCSC.

p. 23 The state notes that it plans to use funds from this potential grant to support expansion to “grow and replicate its highest performing schools.”

p. 27 The proposal cites a 2014 Urban Charter Study from CREDO showing that students attending Atlanta charters show almost 3 weeks of additional growth in math compared to students in traditional schools, and over four additional weeks of growth in reading, compared to traditional public school students.

p. e42 The appendix includes a letter of support from the Georgia Charter Schools Association expressing its willingness to work with the state in these efforts. The fact that the state association has agreed to do this is an indication that what the proposal suggests is feasible.

P. e40 The appendix includes a letter of support from NACSA indicating that the Georgia Department of Education and Georgia State Charter Commission scored 12 out of 12 points on the NACSA index indicating that they are “implementing the 12 practices that are critical to fulfilling the responsibilities of being an authorizer.”

Factor 2: P. 22 – The proposal indicates that Georgia has shown a willingness to close charters that are low performing; thus hold schools accountable for results. This is a positive sign in terms of a vision that requires charters to be accountable for results.

P. 24 proposal indicates that in 2014-15, GaDOE received 32 applications, of which 13 were approved by the SBOE, 2 were rejected as legally deficient, 5 withdrew, 9 were denied, and 3 were not approved for other reasons. This shows that the state is willing to carefully review proposals.

Weaknesses:

P. 21 – The proposal notes that it anticipates a “steady increase in quality charters due to the Opportunity School District, pending formal approval. “ The proposal does not clarify the status of the Opportunity School district, which it appears the state is depending on to help produce a large increase in quality charters.

The proposal contains no statements from either the director or board chair of any high performing Georgia charter school, indicating its desire to expand or replicate itself. Such letters would have helped indicate whether the plans proposed are feasible.

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - Past Performance

1. The Secretary considers the past performance of charter schools in a State that enacted a charter school law for the first time five or more years before submission of its application. In determining the past performance of charter schools in such a State, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1) The extent to which there has been a demonstrated increase, for each of the past five years, in the number and percentage of high-quality charter schools (as defined in this notice) in the State; and

2) The extent to which there has been a demonstrated reduction, for each of the past five years, in the number and percentage of academically poor-performing charter schools (as defined in this notice) in the State.

Strengths:

Factor 1:

Strengths: p. 27 Research cited from CREDO showing that students in Atlanta Charter Schools average almost 3 weeks of additional growth in math, and over four additional weeks of growth in reading, compared with traditional school students in Atlanta.

Pp 27-28 Research cited that between 2012 and 2014 educationally disadvantaged students in Georgia charter schools outperformed educationally disadvantaged students in traditional public schools on Georgia’s end of year exams in reading and math.

Factor 2:

Strengths: p. 22 chart shows that the number of charter schools closed increased from 6 in 2012-13 to 6 in 2013-14, to 14 in 2014-15 and 18 in 2015-16. This does indicate a willingness of Georgia officials to close charters.

Weaknesses:

Factor 1:

Weaknesses: pp. 27-28 No research presented showing that the number of high quality charter schools has increased for each of the last five year.

Factor 2:

Weaknesses: p. 22 chart shows increase in number of charter closed in three of the last 4 years, but not in each of the last five years. Information on page 29 differs slightly from that on page 22 in terms of numbers of charters closed. Page 22 states 14 charters closed in 2014-15, page 29 text reports 9 charters terminated in 2014-15. Page 22 states 6 were closed in 2013-14, page p. 29 says 5 charters closed in 2013-14. Exact reasons for closing these schools were not provided, including how many if any low performing schools were closed.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Project Design

The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the SEA’s charter school subgrant program, including the extent to which the project design furthers the SEA’s overall strategy for increasing the number of high-quality charter schools in the State and improving student academic achievement. In determining the quality of the project design, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 18

Sub Question

- 1) The quality of the SEA’s process for awarding subgrants for planning, program design, and**

Sub Question

initial implementation and, if applicable, for dissemination, including --

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

ii. A reasonable year-by-year estimate, with supporting evidence, of

a) the number of subgrants the SEA expects to award during the project period and the average size of those subgrants, including an explanation of any assumptions upon which the estimates are based; and

b) if the SEA has previously received a CSP grant, the percentage of eligible applicants that were awarded subgrants and how this percentage related to the overall quality of the applicant pool.

Strengths:

The applicant provides extensive details of the proposed project design (pp. 31-41) Information about subgrants will be sent to each charter. All applicants will undergo a comprehensive review process “with an external group, including strong charter leaders and experts from throughout the country. “ The details provided suggest a carefully thought out reasonable approach will be used should funds be awarded.

NACSA provided a letter of support and affirmed that it would help Georgia should this grant be awarded. (p e41) The Georgia charter association confirmed that it would help the project (p e42).

The applicant describes a scoring rubric to review charter school plans that focuses on applicant’s capacity for financial, operational governance and student service plans. P e41, The applicant notes that it plans to award 1 dissemination grant “focused on disseminating best practices with educationally disadvantaged students in an urban area, one in a rural area and one regarding students with disabilities. The plans must include information showing how the school will serve students with disabilities, These are important issues. Inclusion of them in the review process increase the likelihood that schools selected to receive grants, should they be awarded, would be more likely to be high quality schools.

Applicant provides a timetable from October 2016 – February 2017 for grant activities. This is a reasonable though ambitious time line. (p. 34)

The applicant mentions that explicit efforts will be made to encourage charters to open in low income communities in rural Georgia, as well as in low income urban areas. This commitment to students from low income families suggests the state is committed to improving educational opportunities for disadvantaged students from throughout the state.

The applicant notes that previous CSP recipients outperform all other schools in Georgia’s End of Grade Tests. This indicates that in picking schools to receive subgrants, the state knows how to identify schools that have the potential to be high performing. (p. 33)

The applicant identifies several kinds of schools that will be eligible for implementation grants: Schools taken over as part of the “Opportunity district, schools that were approved during the 2015-16 school year, and schools working with New Schools for Georgia.” These details indicate the state’s projection about numbers of schools to receive implementation (7 in fy 2016, 19 I fy 2017 and 28 in fy 2018) is potentially reasonable.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

pp. 31-41 Applicant says an external group including strong charter leaders and experts from throughout the country will be involved this project. No “strong charter leaders”, other than NACSA from around the country provided support letters indicating that they had agreed to work with the project. The design would be stronger if “strong leaders” from around the country and/or from George had committed to being involved.

No discussion is provided about how those schools receiving dissemination grants will be trained to work with other schools. Considerable research provides guidance about how to conduct such efforts.

Reader's Score: 8

2. 2) The process for monitoring CSP subgrantees.

Strengths:

Applicant provides detailed plans for working with and monitoring schools that receive planning, implementation and dissemination subgrants. These include conducting at least one site visit per school, conducting at least one new charter applicant training activity, sharing their status in terms of compliance and performance, providing technical assistance opportunities, etc. (pp 36-37) The applicant also will require a variety of reports including a central one every 6 months, hold telephone conference calls, require curriculum reviews and verify that the schools’ curriculum addresses and include’s Georgia’s content standards for English, Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Science, and Science. Schools will be expected to share academic performance objectives for all grades and all subjects (pp. 41-42)

The level of detail of these plans suggest that applicant has thought carefully about how to monitor subgrantees, and that the plan for monitoring subgrantees is reasonable.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Dissemination of Information and Best Practices

The Secretary considers the quality of the SEA’s plan to disseminate information about charter schools and best or promising practices of successful charter schools to each LEA in the State as well as to charter schools, other public schools, and charter school developers (20 U.S.C. 7221b(b)(2)(C) and 7221(c)(f)(6)). If an SEA proposes to use a portion of its grant funds for dissemination subgrants under section 5204(f)(6)(B) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 7221c(f)(6)(B)), the SEA should incorporate these subgrants into the overall plan for dissemination. In determining the quality of the SEA’s plan to disseminate information about charter schools and best or promising practices of successful charter schools, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 7

Sub Question

1. 1) The extent to which the SEA will serve as a leader in the State for identifying and disseminating

Sub Question

information and research (which may include, but is not limited to, providing technical assistance) about best or promising practices in successful charter schools, including how the SEA will use measures of efficacy and data in identifying such practices and assessing the impact of its dissemination activities.

Strengths:

The applicant has worked with the Southeast Regional Laboratory and Vanderbilt University's Peabody School of Education to determine best practices for starting a strong charter school (p. 42)

The applicant identifies a clear leadership role for itself, and has been actively engaged in identify "best practices to create successful charter schools.

The applicant indicates that it will be sharing this information via technical assistance seminars, webinars and periodic reports. This suggests the applicant has obtained considerable research about best practices and is planning to create a "best practices" website that will be interactive (pp. 42 - 43)

The applicant will make two dissemination grants to schools that are very successful In working with educationally disadvantaged youth. P. 44

The applicant will give a contract to the Regional Education Lab to evaluate GaDOE's practices. The applicant also will survey participants in the dissemination work to determine which practices participants put into practice. These activities will provide feedback to help inform and guide the applicant work. (p. 45)

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not identify training that will take place for schools selected to carry out dissemination activities.

The applicant does not identify the kinds of activities it will expect these schools to do. Parameters to ensure the awarded school is prepared to do an excellent job training adults to adopt/adapt its "best practices" would have strengthened this section. Considerable research provides guidance about how to conduct such efforts.

Reader's Score: 5

2. 2) The quality of the SEA's plan for disseminating information and research on best or promising practices in charter schools related to student discipline and school climate.

Strengths:

Strengths: The applicant will use part of grant funds, if they are awarded to work with Governors Office of Student Achievement to develop online one pagers showing disciplinary, demographic and school climate data. This will be available to the public. The applicant believes that publishing this data will "create greater transparency and public pressure to decrease exclusionary discipline practices. (p. 46)

Dissemination grantees will be required to develop performance and progress measures to evaluate the effectiveness of their dissemination grant. (p. 47)

Applicant intends to continue disseminating information about PBIS. Information presented earlier suggests that this approach can reduce discipline problems and help increase achievement.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not identify training that will take place for schools selected to carry out dissemination activities. The applicant does not identify the kinds of activities it will expect these schools to do. Experience suggests that just because a school has done an excellent job with students does not necessarily mean it is prepared to do an excellent job training adults to adopt/adapt its “best practices.”

Reader's Score: 2

Selection Criteria - Oversight of Authorized Public Chartering Agencies

Reader's Score: 16

Sub Question

1. 1) The Secretary considers the quality of the SEA’s plan (including any use of grant administrative or other funds) to monitor, evaluate, assist, and hold accountable authorized public chartering agencies. In determining the quality of the SEA’s plan to provide oversight to authorized public chartering agencies, the Secretary considers how well the SEA’s plan will ensure that authorized public chartering agencies are ?

a. Approving charter school petitions with design elements that incorporate evidence-based school models and practices, including, but not limited to, school models and practices that focus on racial and ethnic diversity in student bodies and diversity in student bodies with respect to educationally disadvantaged students, consistent with applicable law;

b. Establishing measurable academic and operational performance expectations for all charter schools (including alternative charter schools, virtual charter schools, and charter schools that include pre-kindergarten, if such schools exist in the State) that are consistent with the definition of high-quality charter school as defined in this notice;

c. Providing, on an annual basis, public reports on the performance of their portfolios of charter schools, including the performance of each individual charter school with respect to meeting the terms of, and expectations set forth in, the school’s charter or performance contract; and

d. Supporting charter school autonomy while holding charter schools accountable for results and meeting the terms of their charters or performance contracts.

Strengths:

NACSA says that Georgia uses all 12 of the elements in its “Index of Essential Practices” for authorizers (p. e40, mentioned on page 50). These are elements that NACSA developed based on extensive research. This suggests that the framework which the applicant has developed and uses for new schools and renewals is based on the best available research about what authorizer practices help produce high quality schools. (These frameworks are Appendix E1 and E5) This is consistent with the criteria above regarding the manner in which charter school petitions are evaluated.

The applicant notes that local boards are legally required to “enforce expectations for and ensure the achievement of performance goals set forth in the charter.” (p. 48)

State board rules require local authorizers to annually report and post on their websites information about progress on academic goals for each individual charter along with financial performance for each individual charter. This is

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consistent with the criteria (above) for annual reports that show the performance of each individual school.

The applicant has over the last year, placed greater emphasis on schools serving disadvantaged students. This has been done by requiring detailed information in new and renewal applications about recruitment campaigns to insure that disadvantaged students and their families know about the charter school options. (pp 48-49)

The applicant notes that charters must have both performance contracts and “maximum flexibility” This includes considerable autonomy (p. 52) This responds to the criteria above regarding accountability and autonomy.

Applicant notes that a number of Georgia charters have been closed. This responds to the criteria about the importance of holding schools accountable for results.

Weaknesses:

p. e227 – e234 shows that charters authorized by the state consistently have a lower level of passage rate on the 2011-15 end of grade assessments. This raises concerns about the ability of the state chartering authority to approve petitions that will produce high quality charters.

Reader's Score: 14

2. 2) The Secretary considers the quality of the SEA’s plan (including any use of grant administrative or other funds) to monitor, evaluate, assist, and hold accountable authorized public chartering agencies. In determining the quality of the SEA’s plan to provide oversight to authorized public chartering agencies, the Secretary considers how well the SEA’s plan will ensure that authorized public chartering agencies are --

a. Seeking and approving charter school petitions from developers that have the capacity to create charter schools that can become high-quality charter schools;

b. Monitoring their charter schools on at least an annual basis, including conducting an in-depth review of each charter school at least once every five years, to ensure that charter schools are meeting the terms of their charter or performance contracts and complying with applicable State and Federal laws;

c. Using increases in student academic achievement as one of the most important factors in renewal decisions; basing renewal decisions on a comprehensive set of criteria, which are set forth in the charter or performance contract; and revoking, not renewing, or encouraging the voluntary termination of charters held by academically poor-performing charter schools;

d. Ensuring the continued accountability of charter schools during any transition to new State assessments or accountability systems, including those based on college- and career-ready standards.

Strengths:

A grant to this applicant would support the development of an authorizer evaluation framework and criteria, in cooperation with NACSA (p 49)

That plan also would includes yearly reports on the effectiveness of each authorizer (p. 50)

Every five years Georgia charters are required to go through a “multi-tiered, indepth renewal process. (p. 55) This

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responds to the criteria above mandating such a review at least once every five years. “The applicant asserts while the renewal process examines the school’s financial and operational performance, “academic performance is the most important factor when making renewal decisions.” (p. 56)

Moreover, charters are required to provide an annual report to their authorizer.

The applicant is collaborating on a plan to bring more high quality charter school developers to the state. The State Council has released a report “evaluating the 25 highest achieving charter school developers to determine costs, benefits and likelihood to come to Georgia.” (p 53) Efforts already are underway to bring such developers to Georgia. Building Excellent Schools and New Schools for Georgia already are involved, and the applicant hopes, should the grant be awarded, to do additional work on this.

The applicant describes how it will make schools that focus on racial and ethnic diversity in student bodies with respect to disadvantaged students, consistent with applicable law, “ eligible for more funding at a higher rate for the implementation grants” which would be awarded under this grant. (p. 50)

The applicant describes use of a “value added” model that compares schools with similar demographics. This also holds schools with high rates of educationally disadvantaged students accountable for progress.

The applicant notes that charters must have both performance contracts and “maximum flexibility” This includes consider autonomy (p. 52)

The Governor has established a commission to recommend ways to “establish a more equitable way of funding schools (P, 53)

Weaknesses:

p. e227 – e234 shows that charters authorized by the state consistently have a lower level of passage rate on the 201-15 end of grade assessments. This raises concerns about the ability of the state chartering authority to approve petitions that will produce high quality charters

To be renewed, a charter must “exceed district and state averages on the College and Career Readiness Index.” (CCRPI). (p56) The question to be considered is what impact this has on charters serving high school age students with whom traditional schools have not succeeded. While value added would seem to be important (and is used), a school could make considerable progress with such students and still not exceed the local or state average on the CCRPI.

The applicant asserts that the charter framework addresses accountability for schools during transitions to new state assessments by “holistically evaluating charter schools on various components.” (p. 58) However the applicant does not describe how often or rapidly new state assessments have been and are being included in the overall school review framework.

Reader's Score: 2

Selection Criteria - Policy Context for Charter Schools

- 1. The Secretary considers the policy context for charter schools under the proposed project. In determining the policy context for charter schools under the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

1) The degree of flexibility afforded to charter schools under the State's charter school law, including:

i. The extent to which charter schools in the State are exempt from State or local rules that inhibit the flexible operation and management of public schools; and

ii. The extent to which charter schools in the State have a high degree of autonomy, including autonomy over the charter school's budget, expenditures, staffing, procurement, and curriculum; and

2) The quality of the SEA's plan to ensure that charter schools that are considered to be LEA's under State law and LEA's in which charter schools are located will comply with sections 613(a)(5) and 613(e)(1)(B) of IDEA (20 U.S.C. 1400, et seq.), the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (42 U.S.C. 6101, et seq.), title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d, et seq.), title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. 1681, et seq.), and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794).

Strengths:

The applicant asserts that charters in the state have "maximum flexibility from the law as required by law....charter schools control their budgets, expenditures, staff, procurement and curriculum." The applicant asserts that charters "have the autonomy and ability to make all major decisions."(p 58)

The applicant asserts that the Georgia Department of Education "ensures compliance with federal laws." The proposal provides details about how the state looks at data for charters, compares it to surrounding schools, examines complaints received, and reviews school's policies and procedures. Such actions are consistent with the criteria requiring SEA's to have a plan ensuring that charter schools are complying with various federal laws. (p. 59)

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses: No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - High-Quality Authorizing and Monitoring Processes

1. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that all authorized public chartering agencies in the State use one or more of the following:

a) Authorizing processes that establish clear criteria for evaluating charter applications and include a multi-tiered clearance or review of a charter school, including a final review immediately before the school opens for its first operational year.

Strengths:

Strengths

p 8 Georgia charters go through a multi-tiered review before initial approval. The framework includes detailed performance measures. These measures involve assessments of academic results, financial sustainability, legal and regulatory compliance. A detailed "comprehensive performance framework for locally-approved charter school evaluations" is provided at p. e47. A copy of the College and Career Readiness Performance Index is provided at p. e65. The applicant provides a New School Charter Application form, page e80, that is used by all authorizers

p 9 The proposal notes that there is a final review "(final opening checklist) immediately before the school opens for its

first operational year.

Weaknesses:

The applicant provides a New School Charter Application form, p. e80. However, applicant does not provide details of how each answer is scored. For example, details such as a 1-5 rating system are not provided. In addition a rubric outlining a what a scale represents was not provided

Reader's Score: 4

2. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that all authorized public chartering agencies in the State use one or more of the following:

b) Authorizing processes that include differentiated review of charter petitions to assess whether, and the extent to which, the charter school developer has been successful (as determined by the authorized public chartering agency) in establishing and operating one or more high-quality charter schools.

Strengths:

Strengths p. 13 – Georgia has a “fast track expansion model for schools that have demonstrated significant success.” Two examples are offered where this process was used. The applicant mentions that it provided a “fast track” review for an applicant, KIPP that has created a number of high quality charter public schools around the country.

Weaknesses:

The proposal would be clearer if it included the specific criteria for determining which schools are allowed to participate in the “fast track process”.

Reader's Score: 4

3. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that all authorized public chartering agencies in the State use one or more of the following:

c) Clear and specific standards and formalized processes that measure and benchmark the performance of the authorized public chartering agency or agencies, including the performance of its portfolio of charter schools, and provide for the annual dissemination of information on such performance.

Strengths:

p. 13 – The State Board has rules allowing for monitoring of local boards of education. The applicant notes that school districts that authorize charters are required to post information annually on their websites information about charters they authorize. This includes information among other things, information about the academic, financial and organizational performance of charter schools overseen by local boards of education.

The proposal notes that the CSP grant will allow Georgia to partner with NACSA to “strengthen the quality of developing an evaluation framework that will allow us to evaluate authorizers.”

Weaknesses:

No information is provided about “specific standards and formalized processes that measure and benchmark the performance of the authorized public chartering agency or agencies, as required by this criteria. No information is

provided about the ability of the state to remove a school district from authorizing if it has not done a good job.

The applicant notes that local boards who are authorizers are required to post information annually about the performance of charters they authorize. But the applicant does not state whether the state charter board posts information annually about charters that it authorizes. P 13.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority - Authorizer other than LEA or Appeals Process

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

a) Provides for one authorized public chartering agency that is not an LEA, such as a State chartering board, for each individual or entity seeking to operate a charter school pursuant to State law; or

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

Strengths:

Strengths p, 14 Georgia has an independent authorizer that is not an LEA. This is the (Georgia) State Charter Schools Commission, which has the power to authorize charter schools. The state passed a constitutional amendment permitting this in 2012.

P. 15 The proposal states that the Georgia State Board of Education also has the power to authorize charter schools. The proposal states that the State Board of Education can overrule a decision of the State Charter Schools Commission, either to approve or disapprove a school.

Furthermore, the proposal states that Georgia law "allows petitioners to apply directly to the SBOE for a State Chartered Special School if a local board denies their application." (p. 15)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 06/27/2016 05:08 PM