

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/15/2024 02:06 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Utah Association of Public Charter Schools (S282A240002)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	35	32
Quality of Eligible Applicants Receiving Subgrants		
1. Eligible Applicants	15	12
State Plan		
1. State Plan	35	31
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	15	11
Sub Total	100	86

Priority Questions

CPP 1		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. CPP1	1	1
Sub Total	1	1
CPP 2		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. CPP2	2	2
Sub Total	2	2
CPP 3		
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
1. CPP3	2	1
Sub Total	2	1
CPP 4		
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
1. CPP4	2	2
Sub Total	2	2
CPP 5		
Competitive Preference Priority 5		
1. CPP5	3	3
Sub Total	3	3

Total	110	95
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Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - State Entities Panel - 4: 84.282A

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Utah Association of Public Charter Schools (S282A240002)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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

Reader's Score: 32

Sub

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

Strengths:

- The proposal builds its rationale on data and evidence, including data on charter school performance in the state, the demand for and popularity of charter schools in the state, and school effectiveness, citing enrollment trends, academic performance metrics, and recent surveys (e22-26).
- The applicant details the specific components of the project (including both the inputs and outcomes), including their holistic approach to improvement of Utah's charter school sector as a system (e22-26).
- The application connects the specific identified educational needs in Utah, particularly in addressing underperforming schools and serving disadvantaged students, with the proposed actions outlined in the proposal (e22-26).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

2. The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible (up to 5 points); and

Strengths:

- The application provides comprehensive and specific performance metrics: Table 1 on e28-29 provides numerous specific, measurable outcomes for each project objective and level, which are tied to the intended overall objective of increasing the quality and sustainability of the state's charter sector (e27-29).
- The proposal has a mix of both qualitative data (satisfaction surveys, feedback on professional development (PD)), and quantitative data (e.g., enrollment numbers and growth percentiles) (e27-29).

Sub

Weaknesses:

-There is a lack of baseline data, which would make it difficult to accurately assess the proposal's impact and progress over time, particularly for measures that aim for improvement (e.g., "increase in the number of breakout session proposals" (e27-29)).

Reader's Score: 4

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

Strengths:

-The proposal has ambitious growth targets of 20 subgrants and 5,000 new high-quality seats over five years (e29-30), which is ambitious given the slowing growth in recent years of 2.4% over the past five years (e29-30).

-The focus on serving underserved students is particularly ambitious: the applicant aims for subgrantees to enroll these students at more than 10% higher than the state average, which is an increase from the current enrollment level (e30-31).

-The proposal has high expectations for the academic performance of subgrantees, expecting them to exceed the performance of traditional districts by at least 5 percentage points (e30-31).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

-The rationale for the 20 total projected subgrantees over the course of the project period is supported by strong evidence for demand (e31-33), including a study showing that Utah was one of only two states not to experience overall enrollment decline between 2019 and 2023, demonstrating continued demand for educational options in the state (e32).

-The application has a particular focus on the demand and needs in underserved rural areas, showing that charter schools exist in only 7 out of 26 rural Utah districts. It also highlights the growing Hispanic population and lack of charter school options in counties with significant Hispanic student populations as evidence of need (e32-33).

-The proposal provides a detailed breakdown of the anticipated subgrantee expenditures in Table 3 (e37), which is based on reviews of recent start-up budgets from successful charter schools in Utah and CSP subgrantees in nearby Idaho. This level of detail provides strong support for the average subgrant amount of [REDACTED] (e36-37).

Weaknesses:

-The anticipated subgrantee expenditures in Table 3 (e37), while detailed, do not provide year-by-year detail on the costs. There was minimal evidence or rationale for how the total forecasted expenses were calculated, and therefore there is little evidence in support of the subgrant applicants' need. Additionally, there is limited information provided about how the SE will differentiate between subgrant applicant needs, as there may be some variation in needs among different types of applicants (e.g., new schools versus expansion; rural vs urban) (e36-37).

Reader's Score: 18

Selection Criteria - Quality of Eligible Applicants Receiving Subgrants

- 1. The likelihood that the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the program will meet the State entity's objectives for the quality charter school program and improve education results for students (up to 15 points).**

Strengths:

- The proposal outlines a comprehensive and multi-stage application process, which is designed to ensure that high quality applicants who meet the rigorous application requirements receive funding (e38-47). Specifically, the peer review process is extensive and competitive, which demonstrates a commitment to objective and high-quality evaluation of the applications (e45-47).
- The technical support proposed may help build the capacity of successful applicants throughout the grant period, enabling them to better serve and improve educational results for students (e38-40).

Weaknesses:

- While there is an ambitious process outlined for selection, the proposal lacks specific, measurable objectives (e38-47). There is mention of applicants providing SMART goals, but the proposal itself doesn't set forth concrete, program-wide objectives such as the number of new high-quality schools to be established, specific student achievement targets, or metrics for improving educational opportunities in underserved communities (e38-47).

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - State Plan

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

Reader's Score: 31

Sub

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

Strengths:

- The proposal outlines a thorough monitoring approach and timeline (specifically summarized in Table 6 on e49) for both prior to and during the award period, ensuring continuous oversight throughout the lifecycle of the grant (e47-53).
- There is a clear monitoring process that includes a monitoring guide and a monitoring protocol, which provide clear expectations, timelines, and evaluation criteria for subgrantees (e47-53).
- The applicant's risk-based monitoring approach allows for efficient allocation of resources and targeted support for any subgrantees with more challenges (e52-53).

Weaknesses:

- The proposal includes the possibility of Corrective Action Plans, but it does not provide specific timelines to address the identified issues, which could lead to delays in subgrantees resolving identified problems (e49-52).

Sub

Reader's Score: 9

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

Strengths:

- Alignment with existing authorizer frameworks allows subgrantees to use their existing materials, minimizing duplicative work for schools/subgrantees (e53-55).
- The applicant proposes to share monitoring findings directly with authorizers, which will create greater efficiency in the dissemination of this valuable data (e54-55).

Weaknesses:

- There is limited detail about how authorizers will be involved in the monitoring process – greater authorizer involvement upfront may minimize duplication of work later in the process, for authorizers (e53-55).

Reader's Score: 4

3. Provide technical assistance and support for--

- i. The eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program; and**
- ii. Quality authorizing efforts in the State (up to 10 points);**

Strengths:

- There are a variety of different types of supports identified, giving schools different options for successfully utilizing the technical assistance: for example, webinars, office hours, and cohorts (e55-61).
- The applicant outlines the different leadership development programs for subgrantees, such as the aspiring charter executive seminars, the charter school leadership incubator, and the new director cohort (e57-58).
- The proposal provides information about support for authorizers, including quarterly trainings and a new authorizer boot camp (e59-61) in order to ensure that authorizers are performing their roles effectively.

Weaknesses:

- There is limited detail on whether there will be customized technical assistance for schools with problems or concerns falling outside of the issues outlined in the proposal, outside of coaching (e55-61).

Reader's Score: 9

4. The State entity's plan to solicit and consider input from parents and other members of the community on the implementation and operation of charter schools in the State (up to 5 points); and

Strengths:

- The proposal gives information about existing engagement in Utah with parents and community members in charter schools, which provides a baseline for further engagement opportunities (e61-63).
- The application notes specific engagement requirements for subgrantees to ensure that stakeholder input is incorporated into school planning and implementation (e61-63).

Sub

Weaknesses:

There is limited detail to describe continuous engagement on the operation of charter schools, particularly for established charter schools that are not going through the startup process (e61-63).

Reader's Score: 4

- 5. The degree of flexibility afforded by the State's charter school law and how the State entity will work to maximize the flexibility provided to charter schools under such law (up to 5 points).**

Strengths:

-The charter school law in Utah provides substantial flexibility to charter schools in areas such as hiring, instruct and curriculum, and budgeting (e63-65).

-The applicant notes that they will work to maximize the flexibility provided to charter schools by having a subgrant application question asking for details on how the subgrant applicant intends to use the autonomies afforded to them when implementing their projects (e63-65).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

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

Reader's Score: 11

Sub

- 1. The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks (up to 10 points);**

Strengths:

-The application provides a comprehensive and detailed timeline in the management plan, with specific milestones for each aspect of the project, including: subgrantee processes, monitoring, technical assistance, and community engagement (e65-69).

-The plan has clearly defined responsibilities, with specific team members assigned to each task, which helps ensure accountability (e65-69).

-The plan incorporates regular evaluation and improvement processes through the project timeline and across years (e65-69).

Weaknesses:

-The plan has limited integration with the budget and does not explicitly address how the activities in the project plan align with the project budget, nor how resources will be allocated across different teams or activities (e65-69).

Reader's Score: 8

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

Strengths:

- The application describes comprehensive data collection from a range of stakeholders involved in the project, such as peer reviewers, subgrantees, authorizers, and school leaders (e69-71).
- The applicant plans for a structured process for regular evaluation and improvement with its “annual performance report” cycle (e70-71).

Weaknesses:

- There are limited metrics or targets for improvement, which may make it difficult to assess the effectiveness of the efforts to incorporate feedback and make improvements (e69-71).

Reader's Score: 2

3. The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project (up to 2 points).

Strengths:

The plan describes two full-time employees (FTEs) entirely for activities related to the grant (e71)—the project specialist and the project coordinator—and states that the percentages of time allocated to the other personnel listed, including the project director, are appropriate (e69-71). This plan appears adequate and appropriate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.

Weaknesses:

- There are limited details to justify why the estimates provided in Table 8 for the time commitments of staff are accurate (e69).

Reader's Score: 1

Priority Questions

CPP 1 - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1: At Least One Authorized Public Chartering Agency Other than a Local Educational Agency, or An Appeals Process (0 or 1 Points)

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

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

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

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

Strengths:

The applicant states that there are three entities in the state that are not local educational agencies (LEAs) that may be a public chartering agency (e14-15).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 1

CPP 2 - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Equitable Financing (up to 2 points)

To be eligible to receive points under this priority, a State entity must demonstrate that it is located in a state that ensures equitable financing, as compared to traditional public schools, for charter schools and students in a prompt manner.

Strengths:

Utah ensures that equitable funding goes to charter schools as to traditional public schools, and in a prompt manner. Specifically, state law mandates an equitable funding formula for charter and district schools, including through local property taxes, and there is even an additional small school funding formula for small charter schools (e15-16).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 2

CPP 3 - Competitive Preference Priority 3

1. Competitive Preference Priority 3: Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools and Local Educational Agencies (up to 2 points)

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

Strengths:

-The applicant states that Utah requires authorizers to annually review and document effective practices in instruction, enrollment, finance, and governance (e16-18). This information is publicly available to help improve struggling schools and LEAs.

-In 2017, Utah commissioned a study to identify best practices from charter schools in closing the achievement gap, which resulted in identifying specific practices that could be replicated (e16-18).

-Some school districts, including the second largest in the state, have long-standing collaborative structures in place for

district and charter leaders to meet regularly to share best practices (e18).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not describe how the state entity will disseminate best practices from charter schools to help improve struggling schools and LEAs (e16-18).

Reader's Score: 1

CPP 4 - Competitive Preference Priority 4

1. Competitive Preference Priority 4: Charter School Facilities (up to 2 points)

To be eligible to receive points under this priority, a State entity must demonstrate that it is located in a State that provides charter schools one or more of the following:

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

Strengths:

-Utah provides funding for charter school facilities through the Local Replacement Fund formula (funding equivalent to what school districts receive through property taxes), the Charter School Revolving Account for construction, and the Charter School Financing Act (enabling bond financing) (e18-19).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 2

CPP 5 - Competitive Preference Priority 5

1. Competitive Preference Priority 5: Serving At-Risk Students (up to 3 points)

To be eligible to receive points under this priority, a State entity must demonstrate that it supports charter schools that serve at-risk students through activities such as dropout prevention, dropout recovery, or comprehensive career counseling services.

Strengths:

-Utah law requires charter high schools to provide dropout prevention and recovery services to students that are at risk of failing to graduate, which may include tiered interventions and learning plans (e19-21).

-There are charter schools in Utah that serve specific at-risk or underserved populations, such as students with autism, immigrant students, and indigenous students (e19-20).

-The applicant details the support they have provided to schools serving at-risk students in order to build their capacity, including mentoring programs and technical assistance (e20-21).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: **3**

Status: Submitted

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Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Utah Association of Public Charter Schools (S282A240002)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	35	33
Quality of Eligible Applicants Receiving Subgrants		
1. Eligible Applicants	15	12
State Plan		
1. State Plan	35	34
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	15	13
Sub Total	100	92
Priority Questions		
CPP 1		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. CPP1	1	1
Sub Total	1	1
CPP 2		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. CPP2	2	2
Sub Total	2	2
CPP 3		
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
1. CPP3	2	2
Sub Total	2	2
CPP 4		
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
1. CPP4	2	2
Sub Total	2	2
CPP 5		
Competitive Preference Priority 5		
1. CPP5	3	3
Sub Total	3	3

Total	110	102
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Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - State Entities Panel - 4: 84.282A

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Utah Association of Public Charter Schools (S282A240002)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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

Reader's Score: 33

Sub

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

Strengths:

The applicant provides a robust, research-based rationale demonstrating that increasing access to high-quality public-school choices enhances student learning outcomes, particularly in high-need districts and struggling schools (e22-e24, e26). Their application presents a detailed implementation plan leveraging extensive data and research to support the creation of 5,000 new seats across 20 high-quality schools. These schools will address community needs by expanding, replicating, or opening new facilities where existing options do not fully meet student needs or parental preferences (e26). The Logic Model outlined in the application clearly defines short-, medium-, and long-term objectives, inputs, activities, outcomes, and impacts, delineating the proposal's trajectory throughout the CSP grant period (e24-e25).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

2. The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible (up to 5 points); and

Strengths:

The applicant effectively outlines its objectives of improving the quality of its charter school sector and ensuring its long-term sustainability (e27). These objectives are bolstered by a robust set of specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-based (SMART) performance measures aligned with the project outcomes defined in the Logic Model (e25, e28-e29, e424-e428). A detailed table is provided in the application that outlines a mix of quantitative and qualitative metrics from various sources, such as parent and community surveys, professional development assessments, personnel records, focus groups, technical assistance reports, and conference documentation (e28-e29). Additionally, annual performance measures for each objective are designed to facilitate regular reporting and assessment of progress wherever feasible (e424-e428).

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

The applicant articulates ambitious yet achievable goals and performance objectives (e29-e31). Each performance measure is rigorously formulated to ensure specificity, measurability, achievability, relevance, and timeliness. Their Logic Model is supported by research and historical evidence, validating the attainability of the goals and objectives, and underscoring the anticipated educational benefits for students upon successful implementation.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

The applicant presents compelling statistical evidence demonstrating substantial demand and need for the proposed project across the State (e31-e37). For example, recent studies referenced in the application underscore the applicant's significant increase in school district enrollment and the State's prominent role in charter education, particularly among rural populations (e31-e36). The application cites surveys showing support for charter schools in rural areas despite the current limited availability (e32-e33). This demographic growth highlights the urgent need for additional high-quality education in Utah's rural districts.

The applicant justifies its proposal for at least 5,000 high-quality public-school seats in 20 subgrants that will be awarded to new, replicating, or expanding schools over the project period (e31-e36). The applicant states that average subgrant award amount is [REDACTED] (e36), based on comprehensive reviews of startup and subgrantee budgets aligned with federal guidelines and informed by comparable funding contexts in Idaho (e36-e37). This evidence supports the proposed funding strategy the applicant utilized to generate the average subgrant award.

Weaknesses:

The application lacks clarity in specifying the anticipated number of subgrants per project year according to subgrant type (new, replication, and expansion).

Reader's Score: 18

Selection Criteria - Quality of Eligible Applicants Receiving Subgrants

- 1. The likelihood that the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the program will meet the State entity's objectives for the quality charter school program and improve education results for students (up to 15 points).**

Strengths:

The applicant demonstrates a robust subgrant solicitation and evaluation process designed to ensure alignment with the State entity's objectives for the high-quality charter school program. Successful subgrant applications must communicate a well-defined pathway for implementing, evaluating, and sustaining proposed initiatives thereby enhancing educational outcomes for students (e38-e47). The application thoroughly outlines how subgrant applications are evaluated, including details on the peer review process (e46-e47). It is highly likely that the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under this program will be successful due to a selection process that clearly outlines State entity objectives, priorities, eligibility criteria, and expectations for subgrantees.

Weaknesses:

The application utilizes a four-tier, Likert-scale scoring rubric for evaluating subgrant applications (e47). However, there is ambiguity regarding how the scoring rubric will be applied to criteria during the processes of determining eligibility, conducting reviews, and making subgrant award decisions. Additionally, minimum qualification scores required to be eligible for a subgrant award are also not specified.

Reader's Score: 12

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

Reader's Score: 34

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

The applicant demonstrates a comprehensive approach to monitoring activities aimed at ensuring subgrantees' compliance with their application activities, achievement of project goals, and adherence to federal regulations under the State entity's program (e47-e53). They outline a range of monitoring mechanisms to oversee subgrantees effectively.

Weaknesses:

The application lacks specific evidence of training programs designed to equip contracted monitors with clear and standardized monitoring materials or rubrics. This absence raises concerns about the consistency and alignment of monitoring practices across all subgrantees.

Reader's Score: 9

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

The application includes a well-developed strategy to prevent duplication of efforts among charter schools and authorizers (e53-e55). The applicant plans to leverage existing monitoring processes to track existing authorizer oversight frameworks, including identifying potential risk areas, data collection systems, and corrective action plans. This approach is highly likely to streamline processes and enhance efficiency across the program.

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

3. Provide technical assistance and support for--

- i. The eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program; and**
- ii. Quality authorizing efforts in the State (up to 10 points);**

Strengths:

The applicant demonstrates a sound approach to providing technical assistance and support to eligible subgrant applicants that includes webinars, podcasts, training videos, assistance with subgrant budgets, and targeted coaching (e55-e61). This support is highly comprehensive, commencing in the pre-award phase and continuing throughout the entire subgrant project duration. The application outlines a detailed plan that fosters extensive collaboration among the applicant, subgrantees, external experts, and key stakeholders, emphasizing capacity building within the authorizing community (e57-e58).

The applicant outlines comprehensive technical assistance and support to strengthen the authorizers' capacity in overseeing charter schools effectively, promoting accountability, and improving educational outcomes for students. The initiatives include professional development opportunities, facilitation of professional communities, quarterly training sessions, and establishing a bootcamp for all new authorizers (e59-e61). This demonstrates the State's strong commitment to strengthening governance and oversight within the charter school sector.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

4. The State entity's plan to solicit and consider input from parents and other members of the community on the implementation and operation of charter schools in the State (up to 5 points); and

Strengths:

The application provides clear and concise strategies for soliciting input from parents and community members regarding the implementation and operation of existing and potential charter schools throughout the project period (e61-e63). The plan effectively incorporates a range of engagement tactics, such as statutorily mandated public hearings, community meetings with new charter operators for needs and market analyses, governance involvement, and pre-opening seminars dedicated to gathering parental feedback regarding local charter schools. Additionally, the application includes a clear timeline outlining parent and community engagement activities.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

5. The degree of flexibility afforded by the State's charter school law and how the State entity will work to maximize the flexibility provided to charter schools under such law (up to 5 points).

Sub

Strengths:

The applicant provides a thorough description of how the State law defines the administrative relationship between charter schools and the authorized public chartering agency (e63-e65). The application outlines a framework where the applicant will oversee charter schools, promoting flexible operation and management while enabling operators to adopt evidence-based models tailored to the specific contexts of the communities being served.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

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

Reader's Score: 13

Sub

1. The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks (up to 10 points);

Strengths:

The applicant provides a thorough management plan to effectively achieve the objectives of the proposed project, encompassing clearly delineated responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for task completion within budget and schedule (e65-e67, e431-e433). Each major task is accompanied by specified timelines, milestones, and assigned responsible parties, as summarized in a detailed table within the application. The roles and responsibilities of key staff team members are clearly articulated and aligned with the project's goals and activities as outlined in the application.

Weaknesses:

The application does not provide sufficient details regarding the inclusion of contractor work within the budget. This lack of information impedes a thorough understanding of how contractors will be used to meet project goals.

Reader's Score: 8

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

Strengths:

The application demonstrates a clear and structured approach to ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the implementation of the proposed project (e26, e28, e29, e38, e40, e44, e68). The applicant outlines a systematic process for collecting and analyzing data regularly (e69-e71). Feedback will be gathered through surveys conducted during formal internal feedback cycles and family engagement activities. The applicant emphasizes the importance of using feedback from key constituencies to inform programmatic and administrative decisions and drive continuous improvement initiatives throughout the project (e63, e64).

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 3

3. The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project (up to 2 points).

Strengths:

The proposed time commitment of the project director, project specialist, project coordinator, and other key personnel are deemed sufficient and well-suited to oversee and administer federal grant programs, as outlined in this proposal (e68-e69, e71). The applicant clearly states the project specialist and project coordinator, both full-time positions, will be recruited and onboarded upon contract award (e68-e69, e356, e357).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 2

Priority Questions

CPP 1 - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1: At Least One Authorized Public Chartering Agency Other than a Local Educational Agency, or An Appeals Process (0 or 1 Points)

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

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

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

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

Strengths:

The applicant clearly states that the Utah State Charter School Board (SCSB), which is a non-LEA authorizer, is the State's largest chartering authorizer (e14-e15).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 1

CPP 2 - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Equitable Financing (up to 2 points)

To be eligible to receive points under this priority, a State entity must demonstrate that it is located in a state that ensures equitable financing, as compared to traditional public schools, for charter schools and students in a prompt manner.

Strengths:

The applicant cites State law regarding charter schools receiving per pupil funding that is equal to no less than the per pupil amount received by the school district in which the charter school is located (e15-e16). Additionally, the State demonstrates a commitment to provide charter schools and students timely funding compared to traditional public schools statewide (e15).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 2

CPP 3 - Competitive Preference Priority 3

1. Competitive Preference Priority 3: Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools and Local Educational Agencies (up to 2 points)

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

Strengths:

The application presents compelling evidence of applicant's location in a State that leverages best practices from charter schools to enhance struggling schools and LEAs (e16-e17, e26). Specifically, the applicant has designed a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) aimed at assisting LEAs in integrating data, practices, and systems to enhance both academic and behavioral outcomes for students. This initiative mirrors the successful characteristics observed in the State's most effective charter schools.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 2

CPP 4 - Competitive Preference Priority 4

1. Competitive Preference Priority 4: Charter School Facilities (up to 2 points)

To be eligible to receive points under this priority, a State entity must demonstrate that it is located in a State that provides charter schools one or more of the following:

- a) Funding for facilities
- b) Assistance with facilities acquisition
- c) Access to public facilities

- d) The ability to share in bonds or mill levies
- e) The right of first refusal to purchase public school buildings
- f) Low- or no-cost leasing privileges

Strengths:

The applicant clearly states that they are located in a State that provides charter schools with funding for facilities acquisition, assistance with facilities, and the ability to share in bonds (e18-e19).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 2

CPP 5 - Competitive Preference Priority 5

1. Competitive Preference Priority 5: Serving At-Risk Students (up to 3 points)

To be eligible to receive points under this priority, a State entity must demonstrate that it supports charter schools that serve at-risk students through activities such as dropout prevention, dropout recovery, or comprehensive career counseling services.

Strengths:

The application emphasizes the applicant's commitment to providing charter schools with comprehensive supports for at-risk students, including dropout prevention, and dropout recovery. The applicant presents a comprehensive career counseling program model that proposes services designed to address the specific challenges and needs of at-risk student populations, to include personalized counseling, academic support, career exploration, skills development, and ongoing support to effectively prepare them for future career opportunities (e19-e21).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/15/2024 01:25 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/15/2024 02:16 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Utah Association of Public Charter Schools (S282A240002)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	35	29
Quality of Eligible Applicants Receiving Subgrants		
1. Eligible Applicants	15	12
State Plan		
1. State Plan	35	33
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	15	13
Sub Total	100	87
Priority Questions		
CPP 1		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. CPP1	1	1
Sub Total	1	1
CPP 2		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. CPP2	2	2
Sub Total	2	2
CPP 3		
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
1. CPP3	2	1
Sub Total	2	1
CPP 4		
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
1. CPP4	2	2
Sub Total	2	2
CPP 5		
Competitive Preference Priority 5		
1. CPP5	3	3
Sub Total	3	3

Total	110	96
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Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - State Entities Panel - 4: 84.282A

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Utah Association of Public Charter Schools (S282A240002)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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

Reader's Score: 29

Sub

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

Strengths:

The applicant provides a comprehensive plan for the project design which includes a plan to support the opening of 20 charter schools and 5,000 additional seats (e26). The applicant clearly proposes activities that will support the opening of new schools, including a Charter School Leadership Incubator, Seminars, and a Governance Training Program (e29). Finally, the applicant provides some clear activities that create formal collaboration structures between charter and traditional schools based on existing successful structures in the state (e27).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide information explaining how the applicant will support the use of charter schools to improve struggling schools or to turn around schools; only that the applicant plans to fund the growth of proven successful models (page e26). Furthermore, no specific information is provided as to how the applicant will support charter schools in local education agencies (LEAs) with a significant number of schools identified for support and improvement, though it is referenced that the state's charter law lists this as a purpose of the law (e23).

Reader's Score: 4

2. The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible (up to 5 points); and

Strengths:

The applicant specifies two objectives for the project, with four 'levers' each and multiple Target Measures included for each level. Target Measures are based on proposed outcomes and include both qualitative and quantitative measures, each includes a measurable target that identifies the source where the data will be located (e28-29).

Weaknesses:

Information is not presented on the achievability of each of the target measures for the objectives. The timeliness of the target objectives is not clearly stated for each item, and it is unclear which are annual measures (e28-29).

Sub

Reader's Score: 4

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

Strengths:

The applicant provides clear evidence of the attainability of the objectives through enrollment data and student achievement information (e31). The included data show that increasing the state's charter enrollment by 5,000 seats would account for a 6% increase in enrollment, in line with past enrollment growth. The average Median Growth Percentile in Utah charter schools are higher than in the local districts (e30), these data point to the attainability of the applicant's objective to increase the overall quality of Utah's charter school sector (e27). Finally, the applicant provides evidence that charter schools in the state experience higher principal turnover than traditional districts, therefore the technical assistance plan developed to stem this personnel turnover tide is ambitious (e31).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide ample evidence to support the notion that the growth objective is an ambitious rather than an achievable goal (e31).

Reader's Score: 4

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

Strengths:

The applicant clearly notes the number of subgrants that will be awarded (e32) as well as the amount that will be awarded to each subgrantee (e36). The applicant also provides a rationale for the need for additional high-quality schools in the state (e32), including data that charter schools exist in only 7 of the 26 rural districts in the state. The applicant details an articulated pipeline of schools that have been approved for expansion, replication, or new school startups (e34). The applicant also provides a comprehensive explanation of the low per-pupil funding and low-startup funding within the state as a rationale for the amount of each subgrant award (e36).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not break down the awards by subgrant type when providing a proposed number of subgrants (e32), therefore it is unclear how the applicant plans to separate the grant into new, expanding, and replicating schools.

Reader's Score: 17

Selection Criteria - Quality of Eligible Applicants Receiving Subgrants

1. The likelihood that the eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the program will meet the State entity's objectives for the quality charter school program and improve education results for students (up to 15 points).

Strengths:

The applicant provides a comprehensive timeline and descriptions of all activities that will be part of the subgrant applications process, including technical assistance for the applicants. The application also provides a reasonable list of avenues for publicizing the availability of the subgrants to prospective applicants in the state. Most of the subgrant application requirements are listed clearly in the Eligibility Verification section (e41) and the RFA Narrative (e42). Included in the RFA Narrative Framework, Competitive Preference Priorities are given for "diverse models" and schools that meet the unique needs of rural students (e43).

The applicant presents an extensive plan for selecting and training peer reviewers as well as the process for reviewing the subgrant applications with the peer reviewers (e45-47). The subgrant application process requires a transportation plan for each school.

Weaknesses:

While the applicant lists a market/needs analysis as a requirement for each school applying for a subgrant, there is no evidence that this analysis must include a community-centered approach that includes meaningful engagement.

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - State Plan

1. The State entity's plan to--

Reader's Score: 33

Sub

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

Strengths:

The applicant provides an exhaustive plan for monitoring subgrantees and addressing deficiencies. The plan includes a timeline of activities and a description of each activity (e49). The Project Specialist will create a Monitoring Guide and a Monitoring Protocol to be used by the monitors as recommended by the National Charter School Resource Center (e48). The plan includes evidence of a process for subgrantee expenditure monitoring on a monthly basis (e50), quarterly (e51), and in a yearly report (e52). A sound plan for training staff members and contracted monitoring partners who will be providing monitoring is given as well (e48) and the monitors will all be required to review the Department of Education's Subgrant Monitoring training course.

Weaknesses:

No evidence is given to show that monitoring will include checking that subgrantees are using the funds for activities to help meet the educational needs of their students, specifically including students with disabilities and English learners.

Reader's Score: 9

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

Strengths:

The application includes an extensive plan for sharing information, including monitoring findings, corrective action plans, (e54) and community needs assessments, with the authorizers in the state to help both authorizers and schools with duplicative work (e53-54).

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

3. Provide technical assistance and support for--

- i. The eligible applicants receiving subgrants under the State entity's program; and**
- ii. Quality authorizing efforts in the State (up to 10 points);**

Strengths:

The applicant details a variety of activities that will be provided for charter schools in the state, including Pre-Opening Support (e56), school Leadership Development (e57), Governance Training (e58), On-Demand Videos, and Podcasts (e59). There is evidence that several modules in leadership training include student recruitment, enrollment, and retention (e57-58). The applicant also provides information on a plan to reserve a portion of the technical assistance set-aside to provide customized training based on the differentiated needs of subgrant applicants (e56).

The applicant includes an extensive plan to develop training for authorizers in the state including quarterly in-person training, a new authorizer bootcamp (e60) and a dedicated strand at the annual Charter School Conference (e61). The annual Charter Conference strand includes a comprehensive list of training topics, such as Expanding Access for English Learners, Supporting Struggling Charter Schools, and Making High-Stakes Renewal/Non-Renewal/Revocation Decisions (e61).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

4. The State entity's plan to solicit and consider input from parents and other members of the community on the implementation and operation of charter schools in the State (up to 5 points); and

Strengths:

The applicant clearly details the state requirements for charter schools to involve parents and community members in the planning of a school (e61) and how those requirements are included in the subgrant applications. Specifically, schools must provide examples of how input informed the operation of the school and must hold a public hearing to obtain feedback from the community (e62). Additionally, training will be provided to support schools in the process of gathering this input e63).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not clearly present a plan for how the applicant will use community feedback when implementing the project in the state.

Reader's Score: 4

5. The degree of flexibility afforded by the State's charter school law and how the State entity will work to maximize the flexibility provided to charter schools under such law (up to 5 points).

Sub

Strengths:

The applicant provides a comprehensive description of the State's flexibility regarding charter schools. Utah state law provides exemption from several provisions of the education code, including personnel, school culture, instructional programming and design, and budgeting. The code also allows charter schools to request waivers from other State Board rules (e64) from the State Charter School Board. The applicant clearly states how they will support operators to maximize the flexibility available to them.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

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

Reader's Score: 13

Sub

1. **The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks (up to 10 points);**

Strengths:

The applicant clearly defines the responsibilities of the staff members that will be working on the project with clear timelines and milestones (e65-68). The applicant also provides a table of key personnel that will work on the project and their qualifications to manage the grant (e69). Finally, the applicant includes a comprehensive budget with clear allocations for each staff member, with their time separated into Technical Assistance and Administrative tasks for both current and future staff (e410-413).

Weaknesses:

No information is provided about external partners and how the applicant will manage the work of these partners; however, there are funds allocated to Contractors on page e409.

Reader's Score: 8

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

Strengths:

The applicant demonstrates a plan to collect feedback from respondents, peer reviews, subgrantees, authorizers, and others that participate in the grant activities (e70). This data will be used by the project team to strengthen the project on a year-to-year basis (e71)

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 3

3. The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project (up to 2 points).

Strengths:

The time commitments of the current staff of the applicant organization, as well as new staff that will be hired, are adequate (e71). A full listing of job responsibilities is included which describes the tasks that will be performed by the staff members that are necessary to carry out the project (e412-413).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 2

Priority Questions

CPP 1 - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1: At Least One Authorized Public Chartering Agency Other than a Local Educational Agency, or An Appeals Process (0 or 1 Points)

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

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

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

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

Strengths:

The applicant demonstrates three non-LEA authorized public chartering entities in Utah including the State Charter School Board, state colleges and universities, and private nonprofit colleges and universities (e15).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 1

CPP 2 - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Equitable Financing (up to 2 points)

To be eligible to receive points under this priority, a State entity must demonstrate that it is located in a state that ensures equitable financing, as compared to traditional public schools, for charter schools and students in a prompt manner.

Strengths:

The applicant clearly demonstrates that Utah state law allows charter schools to receive state funds on the same basis as a school district. A Local Replacement Fund provides additional funding to charter schools to offset the funding that traditional districts receive, but charter schools do not (e15).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 2

CPP 3 - Competitive Preference Priority 3

1. Competitive Preference Priority 3: Best Practices to Improve Struggling Schools and Local Educational Agencies (up to 2 points)

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

Strengths:

The applicant provides an example of a school district that has chosen to collaborate with charter schools to improve traditional schools (e18)

Weaknesses:

The applicant fails to demonstrate that the SE is using best practices from charter schools to help improve struggling schools and LEAs.

Reader's Score: 1

CPP 4 - Competitive Preference Priority 4

1. Competitive Preference Priority 4: Charter School Facilities (up to 2 points)

To be eligible to receive points under this priority, a State entity must demonstrate that it is located in a State that provides charter schools one or more of the following:

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

Strengths:

The applicant provides evidence of ways in which Utah provides charter schools with funding for facilities through the Local Replacement Fund formula and assistance with facility acquisition through the Charter School Revolving Account, the Utah Charter School Finance Authority and the Charter School Credit Enhancement Program (e18-19).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: **2**

CPP 5 - Competitive Preference Priority 5**1. Competitive Preference Priority 5: Serving At-Risk Students (up to 3 points)**

To be eligible to receive points under this priority, a State entity must demonstrate that it supports charter schools that serve at-risk students through activities such as dropout prevention, dropout recovery, or comprehensive career counseling services.

Strengths:

The applicant offers several examples of charter schools in the state that are serving at-risk students in dropout prevention and career counseling (e19). The applicant also clearly describes their activities that have supported these schools through mentoring, and coaching key stakeholders. The applicant also includes plans to provide additional technical assistance to applicants and authorizers (e21).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: **3**

Status: Submitted

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