

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/19/2016 12:58 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Uncommon Schools, Inc. (U411B160024)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	15	0
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy	30	0
Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan		
1. Project Design/Mgmt. Plan	35	0
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	19
Total	100	19

Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - i3 Validation - 4: 84.411B

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Uncommon Schools, Inc. (U411B160024)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance. In determining the significance, the Secretary considers the following factor:

(1) The magnitude or severity of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project. (34 CFR 75.210)

(2) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies. (34 CFR 75.210)

(3) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition. (34 CFR 75.210)

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Strategy to Scale

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

(1) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates there is unmet demand for the process, product, strategy or practice that will enable the applicant to reach the level of scale that is proposed in the application. (34 CFR 75.210)

(2) The extent to which the applicant will use grant funds to address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale proposed in the application. (2013 i3 NFP)

(3) The feasibility of successful replication of the proposed project, if favorable results are obtained, in a variety of settings and with a variety of populations. (34 CFR 75.210)

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

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

(1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable. (34 CFR 75.210)

(2) 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. (34 CFR 75.210)

(3) The clarity and coherence of the applicant's multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan to operate the project at a national or regional level (as defined in this notice) during the project period. (2013 i3 NFP)

(4) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project. (34 CFR 75.210)

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations. (34 CFR 75.210)

(2) The clarity and importance of the key questions to be addressed by the project evaluation, and the appropriateness of the methods for how each question will be addressed. (2013 i3 NFP)

(3) The extent to which the evaluation will study the project at the proposed level of scale, including, where appropriate, generating information about potential differential effectiveness of the project in diverse settings and for diverse student population groups. (2013 i3 NFP)

(4) The extent to which the evaluation plan includes a clear and credible analysis plan, including a proposed sample size and minimum detectable effect size that aligns with the expected project impact, and an analytic approach for addressing the research questions. (2013 i3 NFP)

(5) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key components and outcomes of

the project, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation. (2013 i3 NFP)

(6) The extent to which the proposed project plan includes sufficient resources to carry out the project evaluation effectively. (2013 i3 NFP)

Strengths:

The project evaluation plan appears to be promising for producing evidence of project effectiveness. The applicant provides detailed discussions on how they will use a mixed-method randomized control trial research design with random assignment that would meet What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations. Additionally, the applicant includes exploratory moderator analysis and proposes Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) data analysis to account for student clustering in schools that would also meet What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations. The data collection instruments are thoroughly described. The key evaluation questions are strong and credible research questions that are broken into four clearly identifiable and executable evaluation categories: 1) impact, 2) implementation, and 3) exploratory. The evaluation budget appears appropriate and sufficient for the proposed evaluation activities. The applicant includes a rich description and justification for the use of an appropriate sample of students and schools to address the potential effectiveness of the project for a diverse student population in diverse settings and a strong measurable threshold for project implementation. The applicant sufficiently discusses the minimum detectable effect size, power, and sample for the proposed study. There is a strong credible independent evaluation group that will highly likely execute an effective and efficient evaluation plan at the proposed level of scale.

Weaknesses:

The applicant clearly describes and aligns the project goals and objectives with the expected and measurable project outcomes, but not the key evaluation questions.

Reader's Score: 19

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/19/2016 12:58 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/18/2016 10:51 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Uncommon Schools, Inc. (U411B160024)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	15	14
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy	30	30
Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan		
1. Project Design/Mgmt. Plan	35	35
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	0
Total	100	79

Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - i3 Validation - 4: 84.411B

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Uncommon Schools, Inc. (U411B160024)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance. In determining the significance, the Secretary considers the following factor:

(1) The magnitude or severity of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project. (34 CFR 75.210)

(2) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies. (34 CFR 75.210)

(3) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition. (34 CFR 75.210)

Strengths:

One of the strengths of the application is that it presents well-developed statements about the magnitude of the problem related to providing academic success and increasing high school graduation rates of high-need student populations with economically disadvantaged backgrounds. As the applicant demonstrates on Pages 2 and 3, Uncommon Schools Incorporated's student subgroups outperform district, state, and national averages on almost every measure of academic achievement including high school graduation.

Another strong point of the proposed project is the promising new strategy of crafting an exceedingly rare partnership between a charter network and a traditional public school district (Page 5). Such partnerships have demonstrated the potential to improve student achievement more quickly than other models for school turnaround (Page 8). Moreover, the proposed project will scale up existing schools and effectively scale the implementation of the applicant's whole-school turnaround model, which is currently being credited for increasing English Language Arts and math proficiency rates.

The proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priorities established for this competition because it provides a proven effective and efficient solution for school improvement, which is not bound by restricted state policies. Moreover, the proposed project is more financially sustainable because it requires philanthropy for only 3 or 4 start-up years. In addition, the approach preserves the existing community (Page 8).

Weaknesses:

The applicant addresses the urgent problem of creating positive change in the low performing schools of high-need cities by cultivating collaborative, supportive environments (Pages 1-2). While the application states that schools operated by Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) such as Uncommon Schools Incorporated are likely to improve student outcomes more quickly, profoundly, and consistently, and that CMO collaborations may reduce community resistance (Page 4), definitive data was not provided in the narrative to support these statements.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Strategy to Scale

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

(1) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates there is unmet demand for the process, product, strategy or practice that will enable the applicant to reach the level of scale that is proposed in the application. (34 CFR 75.210)

(2) The extent to which the applicant will use grant funds to address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale proposed in the application. (2013 i3 NFP)

(3) The feasibility of successful replication of the proposed project, if favorable results are obtained, in a variety of settings and with a variety of populations. (34 CFR 75.210)

Strengths:

The applicant provided a fully developed response related to the unmet demand for viable school improvement processes by showing that the proposed project will involve the lowest performing schools in the state (Page 8). Moreover, the applicant demonstrated that an unmet demand exists in communities where the project's unique solutions will be applied to failing schools. An overwhelming number of families apply to enroll their students in schools identified for the interventions outlined in the application. The applicant supports an unmet national demand for school improvement models by including related data in Figure B.2 on Page 9.

The applicant presented a fully developed statement to address the factor concerning using grant funds for dealing with past barriers related to reaching scale. Since the applicant's proposed TurnNJ model involves cities with high concentrations of low-performing schools and small concentrations of wealth, raising funds to support start-up costs for the model presents a barrier (Page 10). Thus, by using i3 grant funds exclusively for start-up and evaluation expenses, the applicant plans to bring about low per student costs for the project that will decrease over time (Page 11). Therefore, the grant funds would help eliminate financial support barriers.

The factor regarding feasibility of successful replication of the proposed project was addressed through a fully developed response from the applicant that included incorporating proven solutions to past barriers when implementing the proposed model in more schools (Page 12). Moreover, the applicant proposed to replicate its model by continuing to collaboratively overcome New Jersey state policy issues, and by implementing the Uncommon School's Effective Practices Dissemination Strategies that include the processes of publishing, developing, sharing, and advocating (Page 13).

Weaknesses:

No significant weaknesses were noted regarding this question topic.

Reader's Score: 30

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

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

(1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable. (34 CFR 75.210)

(2) 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. (34 CFR 75.210)

(3) The clarity and coherence of the applicant's multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan to operate the project at a national or regional level (as defined in this notice) during the project period. (2013 i3 NFP)

(4) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project. (34 CFR 75.210)

Strengths:

To enhance the overall success of the proposed project, the applicant provided a fully developed TurnNJ Goals, Project Objectives, Outcomes and Metrics that are clear, specific, and measurable (Pages 14 -16). Moreover, the applicant presented a fully developed logic model for the proposed project (Page 14).

The applicant included in the proposal a fully developed management plan for achieving the project's objectives on time and within the proposed budget (Page 16). The application narrative also incorporated an extensively developed and functional Management Team Organizational Chart that utilized a management team of qualified personnel with extensive experience managing similar projects (Page 16). In addition, the proposal contained a detailed Management Team Experience and Responsibilities chart that outlined names of the personalities involved, their responsibilities, and highlights related to their responsibilities (Pages 17-18). The application also included a separate detailed chart regarding the proposed project's major milestones, project tasks, responsibilities, and timelines (Pages 19-20). This chart included information about sources of responsibility, estimated task completion windows, and other project-related data organized by year.

The application contained a multi-year financial model that would allow the proposed project to be sustained by the same state and federal per-pupil funding available to traditional district schools. In addition, the applicant plans to secure public and private grants to fill in any funding gaps (Page 21). Moreover, the proposal incorporated the project's operating model that had been developed over a 10-year period. The operating model involved tested approaches to utilizing people, processes, and technology. One strong component of the proposed project is the applicant's plan for operating at the regional level. The applicant is currently renovating facilities, staffing, and preparing to launch a new school during 2016 and has initiated strategic plans for other schools, which indicates that the applicant has the ability to duplicate the proposed model. Also, the applicant demonstrates the interest in operating the proposed model at a regional level by conducting regular conversations with New York and New Jersey districts about additional opportunities (Page 23).

The applicant has proposed a fully developed and tried system of procedures for effectively and efficiently gathering comprehensive feedback to ensure continuous improvement (Pages 23-27). The overall system will be driven by data collected through regular and diverse approaches to feedback that includes: student and teacher performance data, a wide range of individual student and school data, and feedback information from external sources. Also, the applicant will introduce a resource team to develop practical feedback innovations that identify, codify, scale, and support the implementation of new approaches to operating the project with continuous improvement as a driving factor.

Weaknesses:

No significant weaknesses were noted regarding this question topic.

Reader's Score: 35

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about

the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations. (34 CFR 75.210)

(2) The clarity and importance of the key questions to be addressed by the project evaluation, and the appropriateness of the methods for how each question will be addressed. (2013 i3 NFP)

(3) The extent to which the evaluation will study the project at the proposed level of scale, including, where appropriate, generating information about potential differential effectiveness of the project in diverse settings and for diverse student population groups. (2013 i3 NFP)

(4) The extent to which the evaluation plan includes a clear and credible analysis plan, including a proposed sample size and minimum detectable effect size that aligns with the expected project impact, and an analytic approach for addressing the research questions. (2013 i3 NFP)

(5) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key components and outcomes of the project, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation. (2013 i3 NFP)

(6) The extent to which the proposed project plan includes sufficient resources to carry out the project evaluation effectively. (2013 i3 NFP)

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/18/2016 10:51 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/18/2016 04:31 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Uncommon Schools, Inc. (U411B160024)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	15	14
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy	30	30
Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan		
1. Project Design/Mgmt. Plan	35	35
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	0
Total	100	79

Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - i3 Validation - 4: 84.411B

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Uncommon Schools, Inc. (U411B160024)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance. In determining the significance, the Secretary considers the following factor:

(1) The magnitude or severity of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project. (34 CFR 75.210)

(2) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies. (34 CFR 75.210)

(3) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition. (34 CFR 75.210)

Strengths:

The applicant establishes the magnitude of the problem by presenting compelling data in the Introduction as evidenced by the following: national poverty rates in the United States are approximately 15% while the poverty rates for Camden are 40% and Newark are 30% (p. 1). Additionally, both Camden and Newark have high dropout rates and only 8% of Camden residents and 13% of Newark residents earn a Bachelor's degree (p.1). Thus the application for a regional level innovation to improve schools that are among the lowest-performing meets the criteria for Absolute Priority 3. The applicant establishes that they have a well-defined track record of improvement as a charter management organization (CMO) with similar subgroups with the data on page 2 in the narrative as well as Figure A1, which strongly indicates that Uncommon students outperform district, state, and national averages on most measures of academic achievement. Thus the applicant proposes a plan to bring the exceptional approach to public schools through a partnership with the districts (p. 4).

Weaknesses:

The applicant fails to substantiate the claim that this proposed plan is a promising new strategy as the only difference in application is moving the current strategies from the charter school setting into the public setting which does not qualify as a new strategy (p.1-5).

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Strategy to Scale

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

(1) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates there is unmet demand for the process, product, strategy or practice that will enable the applicant to reach the level of scale that is proposed in the application. (34 CFR 75.210)

(2) The extent to which the applicant will use grant funds to address a particular barrier or barriers

that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale proposed in the application. (2013 i3 NFP)

(3) The feasibility of successful replication of the proposed project, if favorable results are obtained, in a variety of settings and with a variety of populations. (34 CFR 75.210)

Strengths:

The applicant offers sound statistics as well as antidotal evidence for there being an unmet demand for the process in the following way: 40% of Newark Public Schools and 75% of Camden City Schools are among the lowest-performing in the state of New Jersey and are classified as state priority or focus schools (p.8). Antidotal evidence consists of the more than 4,000 families who applied for 662 open seats in one Uncommon Students controlled charter school for school year 2015-16 (p. 9). The applicant identified initial start-up cost and smaller concentrations of community wealth for philanthropic support as past barriers to scale (p.10). The solution offered is the use of i3 grant funds to reach the regional level of scale which would allow for replication in a variety of setting and with a variety of populations while keeping the per pupil cost at a level sustainable through traditional funding sources after the initial start-up years) (p. 7) (p. 11). Finally, the applicant proposes to disseminate findings in the following ways; by publishing a book, developing professional development workshops, engaging in direct district-charter collaborations designed to improve teaching and learning, proving it is possible for at risk students in low performing schools to achieve outstanding academic results (p. 13, Figure B4). The applicant presents a fully developed plan to scale up to state level.

Weaknesses:

None Noted

Reader's Score: 30

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

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

(1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable. (34 CFR 75.210)

(2) 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. (34 CFR 75.210)

(3) The clarity and coherence of the applicant's multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan to operate the project at a national or regional level (as defined in this notice) during the project period. (2013 i3 NFP)

(4) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project. (34 CFR 75.210)

Strengths:

The applicant presents clear and measurable goals, objectives, and outcomes on p. 14 in Figure C1 Logic Model and C2: TurnNJ Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes (p. 14-15). Especially impressive are the incorporation of the Cost Efficiency goal, objectives, and timeline on page 15 which listed specific dollar amounts which will be raised from the private sector by the end of the grant period. The applicant presents a clear management plan with well-defined responsibilities (Figure C4), a clear timeline (Figure C4), and robust milestones (Figure C5) as evidence of ability to accomplish project tasks on time and within budget (p. 16-20). The proposal contains a narrative which outlines a clear, coherent, and detailed multi-

year final and operating model that centers on providing a sustainable solution to improve student academic achievement on a regional level (p. 21-23). Finally, the applicant presents a top-down model for ensuring feedback which calls for monitoring and tracking student performance data and professional development activities to improve school performance through observations and creating a technology dashboard for school leaders to have access to leading indicators (p. 23). Additionally, Uncommon administers surveys to parents to collect feedback about the quality of their children's schools, teachers, instruction, safety, discipline, and other factors (p. 24-25).

Weaknesses:

None Noted

Reader's Score: 35

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations. (34 CFR 75.210)

(2) The clarity and importance of the key questions to be addressed by the project evaluation, and the appropriateness of the methods for how each question will be addressed. (2013 i3 NFP)

(3) The extent to which the evaluation will study the project at the proposed level of scale, including, where appropriate, generating information about potential differential effectiveness of the project in diverse settings and for diverse student population groups. (2013 i3 NFP)

(4) The extent to which the evaluation plan includes a clear and credible analysis plan, including a proposed sample size and minimum detectable effect size that aligns with the expected project impact, and an analytic approach for addressing the research questions. (2013 i3 NFP)

(5) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key components and outcomes of the project, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation. (2013 i3 NFP)

(6) The extent to which the proposed project plan includes sufficient resources to carry out the project evaluation effectively. (2013 i3 NFP)

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/18/2016 04:31 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/19/2016 11:37 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Uncommon Schools, Inc. (U411B160024)

Reader #4: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	15	14
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy	30	30
Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan		
1. Project Design/Mgmt. Plan	35	35
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	0
Total	100	79

Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - i3 Validation - 4: 84.411B

Reader #4: *****

Applicant: Uncommon Schools, Inc. (U411B160024)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance. In determining the significance, the Secretary considers the following factor:

(1) The magnitude or severity of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project. (34 CFR 75.210)

(2) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies. (34 CFR 75.210)

(3) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition. (34 CFR 75.210)

Strengths:

The applicant included sufficient evidence to demonstrate the magnitude of the problems within the targeted communities. On pages 2-3, the applicant provided supporting documentation to illustrate the demographics of students who currently attend Uncommon Schools as well as achievement rates using State and National standardized assessments. The data provided a compelling argument that this model can be an effective approach in similar schools. The applicant seeks to build on the existing strategy by expanding its reach to include "charter restarts". Since the existing strategy has been successful for several years in similar schools, it is likely that the proposed program will experience similar success and will help to improve low performing schools.

Weaknesses:

On page 3, the applicant states that a study found Uncommon's 2-year impacts on math and reading achievement to be statistically significant and higher in 21 of the 22 included Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) in both subjects. Although this might be true, there was no data included to support this finding. This information would have further solidified the significance of the proposed project.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Strategy to Scale

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

(1) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates there is unmet demand for the process, product, strategy or practice that will enable the applicant to reach the level of scale that is proposed in the application. (34 CFR 75.210)

(2) The extent to which the applicant will use grant funds to address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale proposed in the application. (2013 i3 NFP)

(3) The feasibility of successful replication of the proposed project, if favorable results are obtained, in a variety of settings and with a variety of populations. (34 CFR 75.210)

Strengths:

On pages 8-9, the applicant provided sufficient support that demonstrates how the proposed project will address an unmet demand in the targeted areas. The information included illustrated the number of families who applied to attend the school versus the actual number of available seats in the targeted area as well as the similar communities, further solidified the need for a project of this scale. Since the existing strategy has a proven track record in similar schools, the applicant creates a compelling case that expanding the existing model will further help to improve other low performing schools. The applicant provided a detailed statement of expected barriers that were experienced previously. Most of the barriers identified included start-up costs and funds for evaluation expenses. On pages 10-12, the applicant provided a clear plan for addressing those barriers as they have been successfully addressed previously. The plan also included direct reference to how grant funds would be used to address each barrier. Because the applicant has substantial experience in implementing this model, it is likely that the expanded model will reach the level of scale as proposed in the application. Pages 12 and 13 include a detailed strategy of how the applicant has successfully replicated this model previously using best practices from other schools. The plan is thorough and provides opportunities to disseminate information through publications, professional development with school districts and charter schools, and advocacy efforts. With the deliberate efforts to help improve low performing schools, there is a strong likelihood that the proposed project can be successfully replicated in a variety of settings and with various populations.

Weaknesses:

None observed.

Reader's Score: 30

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

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

(1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable. (34 CFR 75.210)

(2) 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. (34 CFR 75.210)

(3) The clarity and coherence of the applicant's multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan to operate the project at a national or regional level (as defined in this notice) during the project period. (2013 i3 NFP)

(4) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project. (34 CFR 75.210)

Strengths:

The applicant provided specific and measurable goals with metrics that will be used at specific intervals throughout the duration of the project. The logic model included on page 14 helps to solidify how the project inputs will directly impact the project outcomes. The experience of the management team that is described on pages 16-18, increases the likelihood that the assigned responsibilities can be carried out with a level of confidence that ensures the success of project. The applicant also included a detailed and realistic timeline that directly correlates to the project goals and objectives. Included on pages 21-23, the applicant included a strategy for addressing a multi-year financial and operating model. The plan focuses on the (3) main areas that are believed to be most significant in the sustainability phase of the program. The described plan is clearly defined and demonstrates the ability to operate the project at a national or regional level during

the project period. On pages 23- 27, the applicant described a detailed plan to ensure continuous feedback and continuous improvement. The plan emphasizes the use of data to drive the continuous improvement efforts that will be helpful in replicating and sustaining the project over time. The timeline included with Figure C.6 on page 25, describes an ongoing culture of collecting feedback which will increase ensure a smooth implementation of the project goals.

Weaknesses:

None observed.

Reader's Score: 35

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations. (34 CFR 75.210)

(2) The clarity and importance of the key questions to be addressed by the project evaluation, and the appropriateness of the methods for how each question will be addressed. (2013 i3 NFP)

(3) The extent to which the evaluation will study the project at the proposed level of scale, including, where appropriate, generating information about potential differential effectiveness of the project in diverse settings and for diverse student population groups. (2013 i3 NFP)

(4) The extent to which the evaluation plan includes a clear and credible analysis plan, including a proposed sample size and minimum detectable effect size that aligns with the expected project impact, and an analytic approach for addressing the research questions. (2013 i3 NFP)

(5) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key components and outcomes of the project, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation. (2013 i3 NFP)

(6) The extent to which the proposed project plan includes sufficient resources to carry out the project evaluation effectively. (2013 i3 NFP)

Strengths:

Reviewed by a different reviewer.

Weaknesses:

Reviewed by a different reviewer.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/19/2016 11:37 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/18/2016 03:25 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Uncommon Schools, Inc. (U411B160024)

Reader #5: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	15	0
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy	30	0
Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan		
1. Project Design/Mgmt. Plan	35	0
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	18
Total	100	18

Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - i3 Validation - 4: 84.411B

Reader #5: *****

Applicant: Uncommon Schools, Inc. (U411B160024)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance. In determining the significance, the Secretary considers the following factor:

(1) The magnitude or severity of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project. (34 CFR 75.210)

(2) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies. (34 CFR 75.210)

(3) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition. (34 CFR 75.210)

Strengths:

Not rated by this reviewer.

Weaknesses:

Not rated by this reviewer.

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Strategy to Scale

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

(1) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates there is unmet demand for the process, product, strategy or practice that will enable the applicant to reach the level of scale that is proposed in the application. (34 CFR 75.210)

(2) The extent to which the applicant will use grant funds to address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale proposed in the application. (2013 i3 NFP)

(3) The feasibility of successful replication of the proposed project, if favorable results are obtained, in a variety of settings and with a variety of populations. (34 CFR 75.210)

Strengths:

Not rated by this reviewer.

Weaknesses:

Not rated by this reviewer.

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

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

(1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable. (34 CFR 75.210)

(2) 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. (34 CFR 75.210)

(3) The clarity and coherence of the applicant's multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan to operate the project at a national or regional level (as defined in this notice) during the project period. (2013 i3 NFP)

(4) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project. (34 CFR 75.210)

Strengths:

Not rated by this reviewer.

Weaknesses:

Not rated by this reviewer.

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations. (34 CFR 75.210)

(2) The clarity and importance of the key questions to be addressed by the project evaluation, and the appropriateness of the methods for how each question will be addressed. (2013 i3 NFP)

(3) The extent to which the evaluation will study the project at the proposed level of scale, including, where appropriate, generating information about potential differential effectiveness of the project in diverse settings and for diverse student population groups. (2013 i3 NFP)

(4) The extent to which the evaluation plan includes a clear and credible analysis plan, including a proposed sample size and minimum detectable effect size that aligns with the expected project impact, and an analytic approach for addressing the research questions. (2013 i3 NFP)

(5) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key components and outcomes of

the project, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation. (2013 i3 NFP)

(6) The extent to which the proposed project plan includes sufficient resources to carry out the project evaluation effectively. (2013 i3 NFP)

Strengths:

- The study will employ a randomized control trial with random assignment being made at the individual level using a school lottery and an intent-to-treat design (p 27). This is a strong design that will meet the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations.
- Eight important and clearly stated research questions are included on page 29 of the application.
- The research and evaluation methods employed to address the evaluation questions are appropriate.
- The project will be evaluated at the full scale of implementation and will involve all six schools for all but one research question which will be based on five schools.
- Analyses are planned to examine differential effectiveness for diverse student populations (p 30-31).
- A clear and credible analysis plan was provided for each of the research questions and reflects an overall analytic approach (p 31-33).
- Assuming a sample size of 350, the proposal included a calculated minimal detectable effect size of 0.21 (p 31). Based on prior effects observed with the intervention, an effect size of at least this size is anticipated (p 32).
- Figure D1 on page 29 of the application clearly shows that the research questions systematically address all of the project objectives.
- The proposal indicates that the evaluation will be done by Mathematica and identifies the specific evaluator. A resume was provided for the evaluator in the appendices and it establishes that they are well qualified and have the experiences necessary to effectively implement an evaluation of this type (Appendix F.8. p e197).
- The budget narrative indicates that \$521,510 total (\$90,000 per year years 1-4 and \$161,510 for the 5th year) will be allocated to support the evaluation. Overall this is about 6% of the grant award. Two factors would seem to contribute to a lower than typical evaluation cost and suggest the budget may be adequate: (1) the relatively limited and low cost data collection and evaluation activities and (2) internal evaluation resources provided by Uncommon Schools Central Office Staff (p 34, Budget Narrative p 5).

Weaknesses:

- The study will use an intent-to-treat approach in which any student receiving an offer of admission to TurnNJ schools will be permanently assigned to the treatment group. This pragmatic approach should give an unbiased estimate of treatment effect but is likely to underestimate treatment effects since the treatment group will also include some who did not actually get the treatment.
- The proposal states on page 32 that the study sample will be between 350 and 1000. The power analysis and effect size computations were based on a sample size of 350. With 5-6 schools contributing data to the various research questions, it would seem that a sample well beyond 350 could be obtained improving statistical power. No rationale was given for the potentially small sample size.
- It does not appear that the project will be “generating information about potential differential effectiveness of the project in diverse settings.”
- The minimum acceptable threshold for implementation would be a “yearly enrollment average of at least 1,400 students across the 5 schools with PARCC scores, on which achievement outperformance of demographically similar comparison schools will be statistically significant” (P 33-34). This enrollment monitoring approach to monitoring implementation is a very limited and crude way to measure implementation of the intervention and has more to do with outcomes than implementation. The evaluation proposal does not appear to make any provision to assess the extent to which key concepts and components of the intervention have been implemented.
- The proposal and budget information submitted provide no itemization or justification for the evaluation budget and no statements regarding Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staffing allocations to implement the evaluation. This raises questions regarding whether or not sufficient planning has been undertaken to identify the resources needed to implement the evaluation. As a result, this project may be either overfunded or underfunded. Without more specific information on the evaluation activities and costs, it is impossible to know.

Overall the evaluation proposal was “Fully Developed” earning a score of 18

Reader's Score: 18

Status: Submitted

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