



STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

**1749 North Stewart Street Suite 40
Carson City, Nevada 89706-2543
(775) 687 - 9174 · Fax: (775) 687 - 9113**

BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Board
FROM: Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing
SUBJECT: Leadership Academy of Nevada - Charter Renewal Recommendation
DATE: January 31, 2020

1. Background and Summary

Leadership Academy of Nevada (LANV) has submitted an application to renew its charter contract as the current charter contract expires on June 30, 2020. LANV is a virtual school that currently serves 261 students in grades 6-12 and operates out of one campus in Las Vegas.

After a thorough review of the historical data and charter renewal application, staff recommends that the Authority approve the charter renewal of Leadership Academy of Nevada for a five-year term, beginning July 1, 2020.

2. The Process Related to Renewal Applications and the Standards Under Which an Application for Renewal of a Charter Contract Will Be Granted

The first step in the renewal process is the submission of a renewal report by SPCSA staff to the charter school.¹ Specifically, on or before June 30 immediately preceding the final school year prior to expiration of a charter school's charter contract, the SPCSA submits to the governing body a report regarding renewal. The Leadership Academy renewal report was sent to the board chair on June 28, 2019 and can be found within the supporting documentation for the item.

The renewal report summarizes the performance of the charter school under the terms of the charter contract, identifies any deficiencies related to performance of the charter school that might lead to non-renewal of the

¹ Charter school regulations provide for an expedited and streamlined renewal process for high-performing charter schools. Generally, charter schools qualifying for expedited renewal review are those charter schools that are consistently rated as four-and five-star schools under the NSPF and have received no notices of concern or notices of breach for academic, organizational or financial performance. See [NAC 388A.415\(2\)](#).

charter contract, sets for the requirements forth the renewal application, and identifies the criteria that the sponsor will apply in making a determination on the application for renewal. The charter school may submit a response to the renewal report. [See NRS 388A.285\(1\) and \(2\)](#).

Next, the governing body of the charter school must submit a written notice of intent to submit an application for renewal to the SPCSA 45 days prior to submitting a renewal application. See [NAC 388A.415\(1\)](#). Leadership Academy of Nevada submitted its notice of Intent to Renew its charter contract on August 14, 2019 and Leadership Academy's notice of intent to renew can be found along with the supporting documents.

In regard to the renewal application, the window to submit the actual renewal application is October 1 through October 15. See [NRS 388A.285\(3\)](#) and [NAC 388A.415\(1\)](#). The application for renewal must include, without limitation:

- (a) The requirements for the application identified by the sponsor in the performance report prepared by the sponsor;
- (b) A description of the academic, financial and organizational vision and plans for the charter school for the next charter term;
- (c) Any information or data that the governing body of the charter school determines supports the renewal of the charter contract in addition to the information contained in the performance report prepared by the sponsor and any response submitted by the governing body; and
- (d) A description of any improvements to the charter school already undertaken or planned.

See [NRS 388A.285\(3\)](#). On September 24, 2019 Leadership Academy of Nevada submitted its renewal application, which can be found included with the supporting documents.

Leadership Academy's renewal application includes a summary of the key design elements including their focus on building critical thinking skills and their use of online platforms for instruction and communication between students and teachers. The application summarizes past academic performance and goals for the coming years. With regard to the proposed next charter term, Leadership Academy affirmed their commitment to operating as an as an independent charter school² and outlined several recent changes:

- Hiring local mentors/teachers;
- Creating a new curriculum based on Nevada standards;
- Creating small class sizes;
- Increasing high school curriculum to include CTE Courses this year and AP classes in the future; and
- Implementing a tiered intervention system.

Decisions to renew a charter school contract or deny a renewal application are made and based upon the Nevada's charter school statutes and regulations related to charter school renewal (see [NRS 388A.285](#)) and the collective record of a school's academic, financial, organizational, findings from the site evaluation process, and all data and information provided by the Department of Education.

Note that no factor may be given more weight than the academic performance of pupils at the charter school, and the academic performance of the charter school is the touchstone of any renewal decision. See [NAC 388A.415\(10\)\(b\)](#).

In making its recommendation to the Authority regarding a renewal application, SPCSA staff considers the past performance of the charter school, including information contained in the application for renewal, any site evaluations, academic achievement of pupils, and any other information that is determined to be relevant to whether the charter contract should be renewed. See [NAC 388A.415\(9\)](#).

² Leadership Academy previously contracted with an EMO but, with the approval of the SPCSA separated from that EMO as of the 2019-20 school year.

When determining whether to grant an application for renewal of a charter contract, the Authority Board considers the foregoing factors, any other information that the Authority Board determines is relevant to whether the charter contract should be renewed. The Authority Board will consider the “totality of the evidence” presented to it when making a renewal decision. See [NAC 388A.415\(9\)](#). Again, as stated above, no factor is to be given more weight than the academic performance of pupils at the charter school.³ See [NAC 388A.415\(10\)\(b\)](#).

At its sole discretion, the Authority Board may renew a charter contract for a term of three (3) to ten (10) years, or, alternatively, deny the renewal application. See Senate Bill 451 (2019) and [NAC 388A.415\(11\)](#). Note that a variable term length upon renewal was discretion afforded to the Authority under Senate Bill 451 during the 2019 Legislative Session.

The Authority Board may accept or reject, in whole or part, the recommendation of the Executive Director. See [NAC 388A.415\(10\)\(a\)](#). If a charter contract is renewed, that Authority Board may include a provision for a high stakes review during the term of the renewed charter contract which may result in the termination of the renewed charter contract prior to its expiration, or renew the charter contract and include any additional provisions, requirements or restrictions which the State Public Charter School Authority determines are appropriate. See [NAC 388A.415\(b\) and \(c\)](#).

Alternatively, the Authority Board may deny the renewal application for the purpose of reconstituting the governing body of the charter school pursuant to [NRS 388A.330](#) and assigning the charter contract to a charter management organization or a new governing body which may include, without limitation, the governing body of another charter school or a governing body assembled by the Executive Director; deny the renewal application for the purpose of restarting the charter school and issuing a new charter contract pursuant to [NRS 388A.300](#) to a charter management organization or a new governing body, including, without limitation, the governing body of another charter school, which will inherit any assets of the charter school which remain following dissolution; or deny the renewal of a charter contract for the purpose of closing the charter school. See [NAC 388A.415\(11\)\(d\),\(e\) and \(f\)](#).

3. Analysis

Academics

Leadership Academy of Nevada (LANV) is currently rated as a 3-star middle school program and a 3-star high school program according to the 2018 – 19 NSPF ratings. For the prior year, the middle school program was operating under a Notice of Concern due to academic underperformance. It is noteworthy that the high school has not earned less than a 3-star rating during the current charter term according to the NSPF.

The LANV middle school program earned a 3-star rating for the 2016 – 2017 and 2018 – 2019 school years, respectively. For the 2017 – 2018 school year, the middle school program earned a 2-star rating. As noted in the NSPF guidance document, a 3-star school is categorized as an adequate school that has met the state’s standard for performance. Additionally, a 3-star school has an all-students group that has met expectations for academic achievement or growth with little exception; however, no group is far below standard. A 2-star school is defined as one that has partially met the state’s standard performance according to NSPF guidance. Students and subgroups often meet expectations for academic performance or growth but may have multiple areas that require improvement.

The high school program has earned a 3-star rating according to the NSPF ratings for the 2017 – 18 and 2018 – 19 school years. Similar to a 3-star middle school, NSPF guidance describes a 3-star high school as one that is adequate and has met the state’s standard for performance. The all-students group has met expectations for academic achievement. Subgroups meet expectations for academic achievement or show progress with little exception; however, no group is far below standard. During this charter term, the

³ See [NAC 388A.415\(10\)](#). With regard to a second renewal, the Authority is required to place an even greater weight on academic performance than was assigned to it on the first renewal.

graduation rate of the school has also increased, with an 83.33% rate for the 2017 – 18 school year and a 92.00% rate for the 2018 – 19 school year.

With regards to the financial performance and viability of the school, SPCSA staff had some concerns about the overall health and viability of the school during the 2017 – 18 school year. SPCSA staff recommended a Notice of Concern be issued in 2018 due to continued financial concerns, but the Authority elected to table this agenda item on June 28, 2018. Staff does not have any concerns at this time, and no notices have been issued during this current charter term.

The organizational health and performance of the school has been strong over the current charter term. The school has not received any notices regarding organizational performance.

The NSPF results for this current charter term are summarized and provided in the table below:

School Year	NSPF Rating
2018 – 19	Middle: 3 stars High: 3 stars
2017 – 18	Middle: 2 stars High: 3 stars
2016 – 17	Middle: 3 stars High: N/A
2015 – 16	No Star Ratings published by the Nevada Department of Education
2014 – 15	Middle: Not Rated (new school) High: Not Rated (new school)

Organizational

Until the Authority approved a more robust organizational framework this past summer, the previous version of the SPCSA Organizational Framework was a rolling evaluation of school organizational performance. Based on verified complaints and spot checks of school organizational performance, the Authority issues Notices of Concern or Notices of Breach for Organizational Performance. Schools which have not received such notices are presumed to be in Good Standing. Leadership Academy of Nevada has not received a Notice of Breach or Notice of Concern under this framework during the current charter term.

SPCSA Organizational Programmatic Audit Findings

2018	Good Standing
2017	Good Standing
2016	Good Standing
2015	Good Standing

Financial

The SPCSA Financial Framework monitors a variety of indicators of financial health. Leadership Academy of Nevada has a history of clean audit findings, and staff finds the school to be in good standing against performance standards within the financial framework.

SPCSA Financial Programmatic Audit Findings

2018	Good Standing
2017	Good Standing
2016	Good Standing
2015	Good Standing

4. Recommendation: Renew Leadership Academy for a 5-year term

Despite the issuance of a Notice of Concern due to academic underperformance at the elementary school in the 2017 – 18 school year, Leadership Academy of Nevada has improved their academic performance at the middle school level, returning to the 3-star level which is adequate according to the NSPF. The high school has demonstrated consistent performance, earning 3-stars each of the past two years and graduating students at a rate that is higher than both the SPCSA and state average. It is also noteworthy that the school has not been issued any financial or organizational notices. SPCSA staff is confident the school will maintain strong performance at the middle and high school levels. Leadership Academy currently has strong enrollment and financial performance indicators show that the school is financially viable.

Solid and largely consistent past performance supports staff's recommendation that the Authority renew Leadership Academy of Nevada for a five-year term, beginning July 1, 2020.

School Demographic since 2015

Year	Total Enrollment⁴	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
15-16	255	1.6%	2.7%	67.1%	20.0%	0.0%	7.1%	1.6%	4.7%	22.7%	0.4%
16-17	240	0.4%	2.1%	69.2%	19.6%	0.0%	8.3%	0.4%	3.3%	7.9%	0.0%
17-18	282	1.4%	2.1%	75.9%	11.7%	0.4%	7.8%	1.1%	6.0%	11.3%	0.0%
18-19	280	2.5%	3.2%	75.7%	12.5%	0.4%	4.6%	1.1%	4.6%	17.5%	0.4%
19-20	261	2.3%	5.7%	65.1%	20.7%	0.4%	4.2%	1.5%	9.6%	0.0%	16.1%

A – Asian

B – Black

C – Caucasian

H – Hispanic

I – American Indian/Alaskan Native

M – Mixed/Two or more races

P – Pacific Islander

IEP – Individualized Education Plan –A student with a disability/special education student

ELL – English Language Learner

FRL – A student who qualifies for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

Additionally, Leadership Academy of Nevada projects strong continued enrollment through a renewed charter term.

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-2026
Planned Total Enrollment	300	330 ⁵	363	399	439	483
Grades Served	6 – 12	6 – 12	6 – 12	6 – 12	6 – 12	6 – 12

⁴ Enrollment as of Validation Day each year (October 1).

⁵ Leadership Academy of Nevada has a current enrollment cap of 300 students. The school understands that enrollment figures that are greater than 10% of this number will require approval by the Authority.