

Charter School Application Report

Pioneer Technology & Art Academy Nevada

Recommendation from the Summer 2020 Charter Application Cycle

General Information

Proposed Name	Pioneer Technology & Art Academy Nevada
Proposed Mission	To inspire and engage students, especially underserved and unrepresented populations, through an inquiry-based STEM curriculum that emphasizes creativity, collaboration, and innovation.
Proposed CMO	SSS Education Corp.
Proposed Grade Configuration	Opening: Kindergarten – 8 th grade Full-Scale: Kindergarten – 12 th grade
Proposed Opening	August 2021
Proposed Location	School anticipates primarily serving 89030, 89107, 89032, 89027, 89034, 89115, 89081 and 89117 zip codes

Process/Key Dates for Pioneer Technology & Art Academy Nevada

- New Charter Application Training
- February 8, 2020 – Notice of Intent is received
- July 15, 2020 – Application is received
- September 25, 2020 - Capacity Interview is conducted¹
- November 6, 2020 – Recommendation is presented

¹ The PTAA Nevada Capacity Interview was conducted virtually as a result of prevailing Emergency Directives which limit capacity of gatherings, along with space limitations within the SPCSA's offices.

Planned Enrollment Chart

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
K	66	110	110	110	110	110
1	66	110	110	110	110	110
2	66	110	110	110	110	110
3	66	110	110	110	110	110
4	66	110	110	110	110	110
5	66	110	110	110	110	110
6	84	112	112	112	112	112
7	84	112	112	112	112	112
8	84	112	112	112	112	112
9		84	102	102	102	102
10			84	102	102	102
11				84	102	102
					84	102
Total	648	1,080	1,182	1,284	1,386	1,404

Executive Summary and Recommendation

The review committee, which included one member of the SPCSA staff and two external reviewers, identified shortcomings in each of the five components of the submitted application. The review committee and SPCSA staff find that the proposed Meeting the Need, Academic, Operations and Financial plans do not meet the standards as outlined in the charter application rubric. Furthermore, the additional addendum component required of an applicant that is a charter management organization was also found to not meet the standard. These ratings are a result of significant concerns and remaining questions in a number of areas. These are briefly outlined below and detailed in subsequent pages.

The review committee and SPCSA staff find that the Pioneer Technology & Art Academy Nevada application meets the Geographic component of the of the Academic Needs within the SPCSA Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment, but did not provide sufficient evidence of community engagement or community input on the proposal. In addition, the applicant does not identify any local community-based partners that will be relevant to the needs of the target population. Though the proposed charter management organization, SSS Education Corp., has shown success in serving diverse student populations in Texas, the lack of local community engagement and local partnerships remain significant concerns and ultimately led to a rating of approaches the standard in the *Meeting the Need* section.

Both the review committee and SPCSA staff find that the proposed *Academic Plan* approaches the standard as outlined in the charter application rubric. The applicant intends to replicate a model used by Pioneer Technology & Art Academy (PTAA) schools in Texas, which have shown strong results since their opening in 2016. The application lays out strong goals and clearly defines key elements of the model. While the K-8 program, including curricular resources and initial scope and sequences have been outlined, the high school program is underdeveloped. Of greatest concern is the lack of detail regarding the PTECH/CTE program, particularly with the first 9th grade students projected to begin in the fall of 2022.

Several additional sections within the *Academic Plan* lack detail and specificity needed to meet the standards outlined in the application rubric.

The *Operations Plan* within the PTAA Nevada application was found by the review committee and SPCSA staff to approach the standard. While the applicant team brings vast experience applicable to opening a successful school, the operations plan is lacking detail and specificity in almost every section. Though each of these sections demonstrate potential, further information would be needed for the application to meet standards.

The review committee and SPCSA staff find that the *Financial Plan* approaches the standard as outlined in the charter application rubric. While the budget and budget narrative are detailed, there are a number of inconsistencies between the budget and other sections of the application including staffing and projected special populations. Additionally, it is not clear that sufficient resources have been allocated to meet the needs of all students, particularly students with disabilities and English learners.

As a Charter Management Organization applicant, the narrative includes the addendum which was also rated against the rubric. The review committee and SPCSA staff find that this section falls short of meeting the standard outlined in the charter application rubric. While the applicant provided a reasonable and appropriate management contract, there are concerns about the pace of growth and whether there is sufficient capacity to support an effective expansion in North Las Vegas. In addition, several parts of the addendum articulate an approach that is heavily based on deep community engagement, which is not evidenced in the *Meeting the Need* section.

For these major reasons, in addition to those outlined throughout this document, staff's recommendation is to deny the charter school application for the Pioneer Technology & Art Academy Nevada.

Proposed motion: Deny the Pioneer Technology & Art Academy Nevada application as submitted during the 2020 Summer Application Cycle based on a finding that the applicant has failed to satisfy the requirements contained in NRS 388A.249(3).

Summary of Application Section Ratings

The State Public Charter School Authority is required to assemble a team of reviewers and conduct a thorough evaluation of the application, which includes an in-person interview with the applicant designed to elicit any necessary clarification or additional information about the proposed charter school. The SPCSA is required to adhere to its policies and practices, namely the application guidance, training and rubric, regarding evaluating charter applications. Ultimately, the SPCSA must base its determination on the documented evidence collected through the application process.

Rating options for each section are Meets the Standard; Approaches the Standard; Does not Meet the Standard. These are defined as follows:

- **Meets the Standard:** The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues. It addresses the topic with specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation; presents a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate; and inspires confidence in the applicant's capacity to carry out the plan effectively in a way which will result in a 4- or 5-star school.
- **Approaches the Standard:** The response meets the criteria in many respects but lacks detail and/or requires additional information in one or more areas.
- **Does Not Meet the Standard:** The response is undeveloped or incomplete; demonstrates lack of preparation; or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the viability of the plan or the applicant's ability to carry it out.

The rubric is broken into four major sections as outlined below and detailed descriptions of each rubric item can be found in the full rubric located on the SPCSA Application website:

http://charterschools.nv.gov/OpenASchool/Application_Packet/

Summary of Application Section Ratings

Rating options for each section are Meets the Standard; Approaches the Standard; Does not Meet the Standard.

Application Section	Rating
Meeting the Need	Approaches the Standard
Mission and Vision	Meets the Standard
Targeted Plan	Approaches the Standard
Parent and Community Involvement	Does Not Meet the Standard
Academic Plan²	Approaches the Standard
Transformational Change	Meets the Standard
Curriculum & Instructional Design	Approaches the Standard
Promotion & High School Graduation Requirements	Does Not Meet the Standard
Dual Credit Partnership	Does Not Meet the Standard
Driving for Results	Approaches the Standard
At-Risk Students and Special Populations	Does Not Meet the Standard
School Structure: Culture	Approaches the Standard
School Structure: Student Discipline	Does Not Meet the Standard
School Structure: Calendar and Schedule	Approaches the Standard
Operations Plan	Approaches the Standard
Board Governance	Approaches the Standard
Leadership Team	Approaches the Standard
Staffing Plan	Approaches the Standard
Human Resources	Approaches the Standard
Student Recruitment and Enrollment	Approaches the Standard
Incubation Year Development	Approaches the Standard
Services	Does Not Meet the Standard
Facilities	Approaches the Standard
Ongoing Operations	Approaches the Standard
Financial Plan	Approaches the Standard
Addendum	Approaches the Standard
Leadership For Expansion	Approaches the Standard
Scale Strategy	Does Not Meet the Standard
School Management Contracts	Approaches the Standard

² The PTAA Nevada proposal did not contemplate distance education or Pre-Kindergarten. Therefore, the corresponding sections of the rubric were not scored.

Meeting the Need Section

The applicant intends to locate in the city of North Las Vegas and serve students primarily residing in the following zip codes: 89030, 89032, 89101, 89106, 89110, and 89115. Data from the Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment confirm that these zip codes include numerous 1- and 2-star schools. The applicant sets forth a mission to provide underserved students with an education focused on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). While the CMO, SSS Education Corp., has shown success in serving a diverse student population at schools in Texas, the application provides limited evidence of community engagement and community input on the proposal. In addition, the applicant does not identify any local community-based partners that will be relevant to the needs of the target population. For these reasons, as well as those detailed further below, the review committee and SPCSA staff rated this section as 'Approaches the Standard'.

Areas of Strength

- The mission is clear and aligned with the vision. The mission directly addresses serving underserved children and those underrepresented in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). In addition, during the capacity interview, the applicant team provided compelling rationale for the need for STEM education in Clark County, pointing to current gaps in STEM exposure for early learners.
- The management organization has recently contracted with a local charter school sponsored by the Clark County School District to provide services as of 2020. This provides the management organization with a direct connection to the community.
- The application clearly identifies a proposed target community and provides data on 38 elementary and middle schools located within a 3-mile radius of the proposed location on North Bruce Street. Over half of the 38 schools were most recently rated as 1- or 2-stars according to the Nevada School Performance Framework. In addition, the application states that the proposed school would serve a population representative of the local community and within the *Meeting the Need* section projects an enrollment in which 95% of students will qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, 34% will be English Learners and 12% will have disabilities. The PTAA schools in Texas have shown success and academic achievement results with a diverse student population at the Texas schools.

Areas of Concern

- The application does not provide evidence of how the North Las Vegas community, including parents and community members representative of target population played a role in the development of the proposal. The application states that events were held in North Las Vegas, but limited details are provided. During the capacity interview, additional information was shared about some community engagement events and surveys in conjunction with 100 Academy, but it is unclear how this engagement influenced the application.
- While the management organization recently contracted with an existing local charter sponsored by the Clark County School District, 100 Academy, which has seen an increase in enrollment, the applicant has provided limited evidence of demand for this proposed PTAA Nevada school from families.
- While the application identifies several national partners, the application does not identify any

- partners within the target community that will be relevant to the needs of the target population.
- The mission and vision do not address the arts component of the school. Additionally, throughout the application it is not clear how the school will deliver on the “arts” aspect that is included in the name. Ultimately, there is some inconsistency between the mission statement and the broader application.

Academic Section

Within the *Academic Plan* section, the review committee found the applicant demonstrated a few strengths. The application calls for replicating the model used by PTAA schools in Texas, which have demonstrated strong results since their opening in the fall of 2016 based on data from the Texas Education Agency. The applicant has set ambitious, mission-aligned goals for the proposed school and has identified key design elements for the school that are supported by research. While the application includes concrete information about the instructional resources and development of the scope and sequence for grades K-8, the high school program is underdeveloped. Of particular concern is that the applicant has not identified the pathways that will compose the PTECH program and as of the capacity interview, had not made contact with any local colleges or universities that would be critical to the implementation of the PTECH program. Several other components of the academic model are not fully developed, including promotion and graduation requirements, programming for special education students and English Learners, school discipline, and the calendar and schedule. For these reasons, as well as those detailed further below, the review committee and SPCSA staff rated this section as 'Approaches the Standard'.

Areas of Strength

- The key design elements for the school model, including Project Based Learning, Blended Learning, the need for 21st Century Skills, and a Focus on STEM, are supported by research linking the effectiveness of the approach to positive results for children. This helps establish and reinforce the likelihood of achieving success in Nevada.
- Recent ratings from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) indicate strong performance with the overall "district" rating for PTAA schools in Texas reported as an 'A' for the 2018-19 school year³. These schools serve a diverse student body with approximately 56% of students classified as economically disadvantaged and 18% English Learners.
- The application provides concrete information regarding curricular resources to be used in core content areas for grades K-8. In addition, the CMO will provide a scope and sequence aligned to the Nevada Academic Content Standards for each course. For grades K-8, initial versions of the scope and sequences have been developed for implementation at 100 Academy. These will be revised during the incubation year as needed.
- The goals outlined in the application are aligned to the proposed school's mission. They specifically address student academic growth, closing achievement gaps, expanding access and engagement in STEM, and stakeholder satisfaction with the school program.
- The application describes how the school culture will be established using a combination of high academic standards and relationships. In particular, the Innovation Leadership Program to be used during the daily advisory period shows an intentional approach to establishing a culture of connections and relationships. The application also describes a buddy system to help children adjust to the new school when they enter mid-year.
- The attendance goals are clear and rigorous. The narrative provides a description of how attendance will be monitored.

³ As of the 2018-19 school year there were three schools receiving ratings, all A's and B's, with two schools that had not yet received ratings. (<https://txschools.gov/districts/057850/school-list>)

Areas of Concern

- The applicant provides very limited information regarding the curricular resources for grades 9-12. While the CMO intends to provide a scope and sequence for each course, these have not yet been developed. In addition, the application does not include a sufficient description of the PTECH/CTE program that will be used at the high school level. While the CMO clearly has experience implementing the PTECH model, the application falls short of laying out concrete plans for the proposed Nevada school. Ultimately, there is not sufficient evidence demonstrating how the school's academic program, particularly at the high school level, aligns to the Nevada Academic Content Standards.
- The application indicates that art will be integrated into the core academic subjects as well as offered through explicit instruction. However, information as to how this will be implemented is limited. There are very few curricular resources described and only brief mentions of arts integration in teacher professional development section.
- During the capacity interview the applicant repeatedly referred to the work being done at 100 Academy, a Clark County School District sponsored charter school that the management organization has recently contracted with. This raised questions for the review committee as it was not clear as to which model would be replicated, 100 Academy or the PTAA schools in Texas. While the applicant explained that the PTAA model in Texas was being replicated at 100 Academy and it is that same model that the applicant aimed to replicate through an SPCSA-sponsored charter school, there were inconsistencies between the model described as being implemented at 100 Academy and the proposal outlined in the application. For example, the proposed head of school described a heavy reliance on iReady at 100 Academy which only appears once in the written application within the at-risk students section and is not described as part of the assessment approach.
- The proposal does not describe a comprehensive plan to meet graduation requirements and states that the PTECH pathways will be determined in the future based on industry and community needs. Ultimately, there is not sufficient evidence of alignment with Nevada Graduation Requirements and graduation/promotion standards are not clearly defined and measurable.
- The application does not provide evidence of partnerships with local colleges and/or universities to provide dual credit courses. While the application highlights the importance of these relationships for a successful model, it suggests that all work in this area is forthcoming. During the capacity interview the CMO team confirmed that outreach to local colleges and universities had not yet started. It was notable that the team said they would look at workforce needs in the local community in order to establish the best pathways to meet demand. While this is a commendable approach, this effort has not yet started despite the fact that under the proposal the first 9th grade class would begin in the fall of 2022.
- The application lays out five interim assessments to be used by the proposed school and does not specify performance goals for these assessments in the first year of operation. This would inhibit the proposed school's ability to monitor progress towards end of year goals and determine if there was a need to adjust course.
- While the application outlines a vast set of data that the school will use to monitor students, including interim and summative assessments, performance-based assessments in K-2 and interdisciplinary projects in grades 3-8, the overall assessment and data strategy is not sufficiently detailed. Specifically, it is unclear what the purpose of each assessment is and how the data gathered will be used on an ongoing basis to monitor student progress. In addition, the application does not provide details regarding how data will be collected and made available for teacher analysis. While it appears that ample data would be generated from all of these assessments, a

- clear assessment and data collection strategy is lacking.
- With regard to meeting the needs of special education students, the application does not provide an explanation of the research-based programs, strategies and supports that will be used to provide a continuum of services for students. While it is stated that school staff and contracted service providers will be used to provide services, the narrative does not provide details as to the model and approach to serving special education students. Additionally, the applicant provides contradictory information within the narrative and budget as to how much funding will be allocated for contracted special education services.
 - There are several inconsistencies between the application and the budget with regard to meeting the needs of special education and English Learner students. Specifically, the projected percentages of the student body do not align (special education is 12% in the narrative and 10% in the budget; English Learners is 34% in the narrative and 50% in the budget; students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch is 95% in the narrative and 65% in the budget).
 - The proposed budget includes one special education director and one special education assistant in the first year of operations. This does not appear to be sufficient to meet the needs of the minimum projection of 65 students. Additionally, the budget and staffing plan both indicate one EL teacher in the first year. Again, it is not clear that this will be sufficient resources to meet the needs of the 220 (34%) to 324 (50%) expected EL students. During the capacity interview, the applicant team indicated that the staffing would be adjusted to meet the needs of the actual population of students and the service minutes required. Ultimately, it is not clear that the applicant devotes adequate resources and staff to meeting the needs of all students.
 - The school has defined only one measure of school culture based on parent, teacher and student satisfaction. No details are provided as to how day-to-day school culture will be monitored. In addition, while some information is provided about how staff will identify emerging social and emotional issues, the narrative does not describe specific strategies that will be used to support students' social and emotional needs.
 - The description of restorative justice describes the differences between targeted and whole school approaches but does not indicate which the school proposes to use. While the narrative provides some examples of restorative practices, they are described hypothetically. In addition, the practices described (community circles, restorative & resolution circles, and problem-solving circles) are not incorporated anywhere else in the application and do not appear to be integrated into the model. Ultimately, the student behavior plan does not integrate clear, logical use of methods of restorative justice.
 - The application does not include clear and measurable student behavior goals and does not provide a plan to ensure that vulnerable student populations are not disproportionately impacted by discipline policies.
 - The narrative generally describes the structure of the school day but provides limited details. While an annual calendar is provided, there is no information about the breakdown of the school day and how all of the components described through the *Academic Section* will be incorporated. Therefore, there is not sufficient evidence that the calendar and schedule support the implementation of the academic program. There is also not sufficient information to determine whether there is alignment between teacher and student schedules.
 - Substantial parts of the *At-Risk Students* and *Special Education* sections of the application appear to be identical to an application previously submitted to the SPCSA. While the applicant has taken steps to remedy this concern such as identifying changes that will be made to their processes, ultimately, the review team could not confirm that several components of the application rubric had been met.

Operations Section

The applicant team, made up of the proposed board, head of school, and CMO bring significant experience and a variety of skill sets applicable to opening a successful school. The application lays out a reasonable incubation year plan and shows evidence of potential in many of the operational areas. However, on whole, the operations plan is lacking detail and specificity in many sections. There are not sufficient details regarding the process for recruiting and hiring teachers or the performance management system that will be in place to support them. The organizational structure is not clear and there are inconsistencies between the budget and staffing plan. While the CMO has demonstrated experience with facility development, the proposal lacks details regarding the plan and timeline for securing and preparing a facility for the proposed schools. For these reasons, as well as those detailed further below, the review committee and SPCSA staff rated this section as 'Approaches the Standard'.

Areas of Strength

- The narrative demonstrates an appropriate understanding of the role of the board and clearly signals the intention to hold the head of school accountable for performance using a data-driven, formal approach to evaluation. The proposed Board includes several highly experienced individuals with a variety of skill sets, including with education in Clark County. Plans for board development are described and expenses have been considered.
- The superintendent of the CMO and proposed head of school bring ample experience running charter schools and have demonstrated past success.
- The application provides a description of CMO and school staff that will be responsible for essential HR functions including and processes, including background checks, payroll, benefits, and employee relations.
- The management organization has seen success in increasing the enrollment at 100 Academy, a Clark County School District Sponsored charter school that has recently contracted with SSS Education Corp.
- The incubation plan reflects the majority of key tasks for the incubation year, along with the timeline for completion. In addition, the incubation plan identifies a responsible party for each of the tasks. This would enable the staff, CMO and board to monitor progress during year zero.
- While the application does not include specific details or an address for ideal location that has been identified, it does include specific facility needs based on the school model. The applicant also provided information about four other potential sites that have been identified. Additionally, the CMO has experience acquiring financing and overseeing construction projects.

Areas of Concern

- While the proposed board is made up of a diverse group of individuals, several of whom have board experience, there are a few concerns regarding the proposed board. First, three of the six proposed board members are not Nevada residents. While the applicant intends to add at least one parent member in the first year of the school, it is not clear that the proposed board currently complies with statutes requiring that a majority of board members reside within Nevada. In addition, answers during the capacity interview were largely provided by the superintendent of the CMO and the proposed head of school. There is not evidence that the proposed board is well versed in the proposal and positioned to hold the CMO and head of school

- accountable for delivering on implementation.
- The application outlines several key responsibilities of the board. However, there are not clear and measurable goals established for the board. In addition, while the application states that the proposed PTAA Nevada board values the opinions of parents and employees and acknowledges that the purpose of the grievance process is to resolve conflicts, no details regarding the grievance process are provided.
 - The structure of the leadership team and responsibilities of leadership team members are not fully defined. The organizational chart does not indicate specific lines of authority and several job descriptions indicate multiple supervisors. During the capacity interview, the applicant clarified that the head of school reports to the board and that the superintendent is in fact the head of the CMO, who thus is also responsible to the board through the management contract. However, the organizational structure still lacks clarity and multiple sections of the application charge the superintendent and head of school with the same responsibilities.
 - It is noteworthy that the Superintendent is expected to be spread across more than ten schools in three states. In addition, during the incubation year, the proposed head of school plans to split time between this proposed school and 100 Academy. Given that the applicant stated during the capacity interview that the proposed school would not have any staff members in the incubation year, this raises some concerns about whether the leadership team has the capacity to complete all incubation year start-up tasks.
 - The budget includes one special education director and one special education assistant in the first year of operations. This does not appear to be sufficient to meet the needs of the minimum projection of 65 students. Additionally, the budget and staffing plan both allocate one EL teacher in the first year. Again, it is not clear that this plan will be sufficient to meet the needs of the minimum projection of 220 expected EL students. During the capacity interview, the applicant team indicated that the staffing would be adjusted to meet the needs of the actual population of students and the service minutes required. However, given the current enrollment projections, it is not clear the school would be appropriately staffed to meet the needs of the expected student population, including special student populations.
 - There are several inconsistencies between the budget, staffing plan, and narrative. These include the projected student population (special education, English learners, and students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch), the number of administrators in year one, and the number of teachers in year one.
 - The application provides general information about hiring, indicating that all teachers will be interviewed, observed teaching, and will submit all background and reference checks. The proposal does not provide details on the process for hiring high quality teachers and leaders and it is unclear who is ultimately responsible for hiring decisions. Additionally, the teacher salary range of \$35,000 - \$47,500 is low compared to the local school district and may make it difficult to hire and retain high quality teachers.
 - The proposal does not discuss the performance management system and the approach to supporting and developing teachers. The narrative only provides information about the professional development budget for teachers. In addition, the narrative does not describe how the school will identify low performance among staff and there is no discussion of the steps that will be taken in the event that a staff member fails to meet expectations other than indicating that written notice will be provided in the event that a staff member is dismissed.
 - Very limited information is provided about the lottery process. The application lists several recruitment strategies but does not describe how the school will reach out to families in poverty, families with students with disabilities and other students who may be at risk of academic failure.
 - The enrollment plan outlines the intention to serve a large number of students and grade levels

from the outset. This includes no allowance for lower enrollment in traditionally harder to recruit grade levels. The application states that the enrollment plan has been created based on the facility as well as meeting the community need, but without explanation or context for this claim. Further, the application states that PTAA schools in Texas have been opened with more than 400 students and three grades, which is actually quite a bit smaller than this proposal which includes 648 students across nine grade levels in the first year. Ultimately, there is not sufficient evidence that the enrollment plan is reasonable and supported by a clear rationale.

- The application provides limited information on services including food service, nursing, facilities management and school safety. With regard to nursing, the operations plan indicates that a full-time nurse will be employed. However, the budget shows that this will not occur until the second year of operation. In addition, limited details are provided about the purchasing process that will be used by the school. Regarding technology services, the application outlines the local area networking, hardware, and firewall to be used, but does not provide details on user access control policies, data storage and backup protocols, or policies to ensure security of data and information technology infrastructure.
- The application does not provide details regarding the plan and timeline to select and secure a facility. In addition, while the CMO has worked with several municipalities and jurisdiction in other states, the applicant has not made contact with the local jurisdiction for the potential site and does not provide a plan or timeline to do so.
- The application did not include details as to how the school's Emergency Management Plan will be developed, simply stating that the proposed head of school would be responsible for the development. Therefore, there is evidence that the safety and security plans are likely to ensure a safe environment and meet requirements in statute and regulation.

Financial Section

The applicant brings the experience of a CMO that has demonstrated success in supporting the PTAA Texas schools with strong financial management. While the budget and budget narrative are detailed, there are a number of inconsistencies between the budget and other sections of the application including staffing and projected special populations. In addition, the applicant is projecting at least 65 special education student and 220 English Learners in the first year but does not appear to have allocated sufficient staff to meet the needs of these student populations. Additionally, there is insufficient information regarding the financial policies and procedures that would be in place. For these reasons, as well as those detailed further below, the review committee and SPCSA staff rated this section as 'Approaches the Standard'.

Areas of Strength

- Based on financial audits for the last three years for PTAA Texas, which show relatively strong financial position and no audit findings, the CMO demonstrates expertise and experience managing charter school finances.
- The applicant provides information regarding the proposed financial system and commits to using the State chart of accounts as well as complying with all required government accounting procedures. In addition, the applicant indicates that if approved the governing body will create a finance committee charged with monitoring the school's budget.

Areas of Concern

- There are several inconsistencies between the budget and the narrative. Specifically, the expected populations of English Learners (EL), students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL), and special education students (IEP) do not match. In addition, there are inconsistencies in the staffing model. While the staffing section shows two administrators in the first year (Head of School and Admin 4), the budget only shows one administrator in the first year. Additionally, the services section indicates that a full-time nurse will be employed. However, the budget indicates that the nurse position begins in the second year of the school.
- The budget includes one special education director and one special education assistant in the first year of operations. This does not appear to be sufficient to meet the needs of the minimum projection of 65 students. Additionally, the budget and staffing plan both indicate one EL teacher in the first year. Again, it is not clear that this will be sufficient resources to meet the needs of the minimum projection of 220 expected EL students. During the capacity interview, the applicant team indicated that the staffing would be adjusted to meet the needs of the actual population of students and the service minutes required but based on the enrollment projections the staffing allocations do not appear to be sufficient.
- The budget narrative indicates that PTAA Nevada will have a no-interest loan from the CMO for \$150,000. However, the budget does not account for the repayment of this loan.
- In school years three through six, the budget shows that the facilities expenses will make up 20% or more of the proposed school's expenses. This is significant and on the higher end for charter school facility expenses. This may pose challenges in ensuring sufficient resources are allocated to critical school expenses.
- Very little information is provided regarding the financial policies and procedures that will be in place to ensure appropriate segregation of duties and financial controls.

Addendum Section

The superintendent of the CMO and the proposed head of school bring substantial experience and a strong track record. In addition, the applicant has provided a strong draft management contract with clear, reasonable, and appropriate terms. However, the CMO has scaled very rapidly over the last four years with additional growth in future years already approved and the application provides limited information about how the CMO has or will scale to meet the growing responsibilities. Additionally, several parts of the addendum articulate an approach that is heavily based on deep community engagement, which is not evidenced in the *Meeting the Need* section. For these reasons, as well as those detailed further below, the review committee and SPCSA staff rated this section as 'Approaches the Standard'.

Areas of Strength

- Both the superintendent of the CMO and the proposed head of school bring substantial experience and a strong track record. Given the management organization's recent agreement to provide services for a Clark County School District sponsored school, both the proposed superintendent and proposed head of school have the opportunity to gain local experience.
- The draft management contract provides clear details regarding the services, fees, and terms. The contract does not include any automatic renewal provisions or overly restrictive termination provisions. The management fee is reasonable at 12% in the first three years of the charter and then declines to 10% in subsequent years.
- An annual evaluation of the CMO by the governing board is written directly into the proposed management agreement. This section includes metrics for the evaluation and in the event that the CMO is not meeting standards, lays out terms for a refund of the service fee on a sliding scale as well as a process for putting in place a corrective action plan.

Areas of Concern

- While the CMO has demonstrated the ability to identify a qualified head of school for the proposed school, limited information is provided regarding a leadership recruitment and development plan for sourcing new leadership.
- During the capacity interview, the applicant clarified that the head of school reports to the board and that the superintendent is in fact the head of the CMO, who thus is also responsible to the board through the management contract. However, the organizational structure still lacks clarity and multiple sections of the application charge the superintendent and head of school with the same responsibility. For example, within the addendum, the application outlines several functions that are shared between the head of school and CMO without any delineation of responsibilities.
- The capacity interview revealed the CMO and superintendent are working with more than ten schools across three states. In addition, during the incubation year, the proposed head of school plans to split time between this proposed school and 100 Academy. All of these factors raise questions about capacity and potential impacts on quality of programming.
- The application describes a scale strategy with a three-tiered support model but does not indicate which would be used with the proposed school. The narrative indicates that it is a place-based model that required deep community knowledge and relationship. However, this appears to be inconsistent with the *Meeting the Need* section in which the application is not able to provide evidence of deep community engagement or partnerships. In addition, throughout the capacity

interview, the vast majority of answer came from the CMO superintendent and proposed head of school, both of whom have less than a year of experience working with schools in Nevada, rather than from the three local board members.

- The narrative does not provide any information about how essential elements of the organizational model will be infused in the proposed schools and suggests instead that the schools are similar primarily in curriculum and STEM and PTECH focus. This is inconsistent with the rest of the application, which is billed as replication of successful schools in Texas.
- The CMO has seen rapid growth in Texas, having expanded from two charter schools in 2016 to six as of 2020. The CMO has recently expanded to both Colorado and Nevada (providing services to a Clark County School District sponsored school). However, the applicant does not provide information on how the CMO has or will scale to meet this expansion. Additionally, the organizational chart shows very limited CMO staff.
- The memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the incubation year provides a list of responsibilities for the CMO but does not provide any information about the proposed \$150,000 no-interest loan and repayment terms.

Capacity Interview Summary

Based on the independent and collective review of the application, the review committee conducted a virtual capacity interview of the applicant to assess the capacity to execute the application’s overall plan. The capacity interview for PTAA Nevada was conducted on Friday, September 25, and lasted approximately 120-minutes. All of the proposed members of the board, along with the proposed head of school and members of the CMO attended on behalf of the applicant. Questions during the capacity interview focused primarily on five key areas:

Targeted Plan	Staffing Plan
Parent and Community Engagement	Human Resources
Curriculum & Instructional Design	Student Recruitment and Enrollment
Promotion & High School Graduation Requirements	Incubation Year Development
Dual Credit Partnership	Financial Plan
Driving for Results	Leadership For Expansion
At-Risk Students & Special Populations	Scale Strategy
Board Governance	School Management Contracts
Leadership Team	

Lastly, the capacity interview included a scenario-based question that probed the Committee to Form and proposed Principal’s capacity to develop a plan in response to school performance data.

District Input

Per Assembly Bill 462 (2019), the SPCSA solicited input from the Clark County School District regarding this application.⁴ The timeline regarding this request for input is below and the response provided by the Clark County School district is attached.

- August 26, 2020 – Memo sent to CCSD soliciting input.
- September 28, 2020 – Written input provided from CCSD to SPCSA.

⁴ Assembly Bill 462 (2019) section 6.3, subsection 1, paragraph (d): “The proposed sponsor of a charter school shall, in reviewing an application to form a charter school...If the proposed sponsor is not the board of trustees of a school district, solicit input from the board of trustees of the school district in which the proposed charter school will be located.”

Appendix (Rubric Detail)

The information below indicates *rubric criteria that the applicant did not substantially meet*.

Meeting the Need

- **Targeted Plan**
 - *Clear and comprehensive explanation of how the proposed model meets identified community needs.*
 - *Demonstrated capacity, credible plans, and thorough research and analysis in order to intentionally serve the identified student populations, prevent at-risk students from dropping out, and/or provide more high-quality schools in underserved areas, as defined in the Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment.*
- **Parent and Community Involvement**
 - *Demonstrates clear evidence of the involvement of parents, neighborhood, and/or community members representative of target population in the development of the plan.*
 - *The committee to form demonstrates their ties to and/or knowledge of the target community.*
 - *Identifies specific partnerships which are shown to be relevant to the needs of the target population, including partners located in the community that the applicant intends to serve.*
 - *Partnerships are evidenced by specific letters of commitment outlining the accountabilities of both parties and clear, measurable, time-specific deliverables from the partner which are clearly relevant to the needs of the target population.*

Academic Plan

- **Curriculum & Instructional Design**
 - *A clear explanation, supported by evidence, demonstrating how the school's academic program aligns to the Nevada Academic Content Standards, including both the Common Core Academic Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards, and that the school teaches all required subjects at each grade level.*
- **Promotion & High School Graduation Requirements**
 - *School plans explicitly demonstrate clear evidence of alignment with Nevada Graduation Requirements and ensure college and career readiness*
 - *Structures are in place to support students at risk of dropping out, including those who are overage for grade, those needing to access credit recovery options, and those performing significantly below grade level*
 - *Graduation/promotion standards for students are clearly defined and measurable, demonstrating high expectations for all students*
- **Dual Credit Partnership**
 - *A draft memorandum of understanding between the charter school and the college or university through which the credits will be earned and a term sheet, which must set forth:*
 - *The proposed duration of the relationship between the charter school and the college or university and the conditions for renewal and termination of the relationship;*
 - *The roles and responsibilities of the governing body of the charter school, the employees of the charter school and the college or university;*
 - *The scope of the services and resources that will be provided by the college or university;*
 - *The manner and amount that the college or university will be compensated for providing such services and resources, including, without limitation, any tuition and*

needs.

- **School Structure: Student Discipline**
 - *Presents sound policies for student discipline, suspension, and expulsion including procedures for due process.*
 - *A plan to ensure that vulnerable student populations are not disproportionately impacted by discipline policies.*
 - *Goals for student behavior are clear and measurable; there is a plan, and designated personnel, for monitoring and reporting related to behavior goals as well as ongoing maintenance of discipline records.*
 - *Student behavior plan integrates clear, logical use of methods of restorative justice per Assembly Bill 168 (2019).*
- **School Structure: Calendar and Schedule**
 - *Proposed Calendar meets or exceeds the minimum of 180 (or equivalent) days of instruction.*
 - *Calendar and schedule support implementation of the academic program.*
 - *Alignment between teacher and student schedules.*

Operations Plan

- **Board Governance**
 - *Demonstrates that the membership of the governing body will contribute the wide range of relevant knowledge, skills, and commitment needed to oversee a successful charter school, including but not limited to educational, financial, accounting, legal, and community experience and expertise, as well as special skill set to reflect school-specific programs, if applicable (e.g., STEM, fine arts, blended learning, alternative programs, etc.)*
 - *Qualifications and experience levels of governing body members with legal experience significantly exceeds the statutory minimum requirements and demonstrates a proven track record of successful management or oversight of complex, high risk/high profile legal matters.*
 - *Describes the process for resolving student/parent objections and the mechanism for removal of governing body members if needed.*
 - *Goals are clear and measurable, and contribute to improved academic outcomes for students and overall advancement of the organization.*
 - *The board puts into place a structure that enables it to collect the information it needs to evaluate the EMO/CMO, if applicable.*
- **Leadership Team**
 - *The organizational chart clearly indicates all positions delineating board and management roles and lines of authority.*
 - *Structure demonstrates effective assignment of management roles and distribution of responsibilities for instructional leadership, curriculum, personnel, budgeting, financial management, management of state categorical revenue streams, special education and ELL programming, legal compliance, state reporting, external relations, and any unique, school-specific staffing needs..*
 - *Leadership job descriptions present a clear allocation of duties based on NDE and general state reporting and compliance requirements, including but not limited student information system management and the duties contained in the Reporting Requirements manual and current NAC and NRS.*
- **Staffing Plan**
 - *Appropriately staffed to meet the needs of the expected student population, including special student populations.*

- *Staffing plan matches the proposed budget and is explicitly aligned to both budget narrative assumptions and to budget calculations.*
- *Staffing plan aligns to the applicant’s commitment to meet the needs identified in the Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment.*
- **Human Resources**
 - *Articulates process for recruiting and hiring high quality teachers and leaders.*
 - *School performance management system is likely to retain and promote talented staff, allows for re-structuring and removal of staff as needed, creates opportunities for leadership development, and sets clear expectations.*
 - *School performance management system identifies low-performing teacher or leader performance, provides plans, support, and training for improvement, and provides the steps the school leadership will take in instances of persistent low-performance.*
- **Student Recruitment and Enrollment**
 - *The enrollment plan reflects an understanding of the Nevada context.*
 - *The enrollment plan, including annual growth, is reasonable and supported by a clear rationale.*
 - *The enrollment plan addresses lotteries, weighted lotteries, enrollment preferences, student attrition and mandatory backfilling*
 - *Includes outreach and recruitment strategies that demonstrates an understanding of the community likely to be served and is likely to allow the school to enroll sufficient numbers of students who are representative of either the surrounding zoned schools or a mission-specific educationally disadvantaged population.*
 - *Minimum 45-day notification period followed by 45-day enrollment period OR a combined 90-day notification and enrollment period.*
 - *Demonstrated interest and intent to enroll commitments by a significant number of parents for Year 1. These forms should include the following information at minimum:*
 - *Parent name and contact information*
 - *Zip code of residency*
 - *Student name(s) and grade levels for the proposed opening year*
- **Services**
 - *Operations plan includes logical plans for all essential and program-specific non-academic services, including, but not limited to:*
 - *Supporting transportation, food service, facilities management, nursing, and purchasing processes, and school safety.*
 - *Staff structure/plan is adequate for the proposed school and aligns with the educational program; lines of authority are clear.*
 - *IT plans should include consideration of:*
 - *User access control policies, limitation of access rights and procedures for removing access from departing employees.*
 - *Policies for data stored on personal and portable devices aimed at minimizing inadvertent disclosing of information, such as theft or misplaced equipment.*
 - *Strategy for information backups and disaster recovery.*
 - *Malware and malicious software prevention and removal strategy.*
 - *Costs of services are realistic and align with budget and academic program.*
 - *Committee to form articulate clear metrics and process for evaluating effectiveness of services.*
- **Facilities**

- *Identifies a viable educational facility or facilities that meets the needs of the students and accommodates the programmatic and operational needs of the school(s) over the charter term as described throughout the application—OR—outlines in detail the plan and timeline to identify and secure facilities as needed.*
- *If a facility has not yet been identified*
 - *Assurance that the proposed location will be in compliance with applicable building codes, health and safety laws, and with the requirements of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).*
 - *Plan for finding a location including a proposed schedule for doing so.*
 - *A clear, time bound plan to engage with local jurisdiction(s) and municipalities.*
- **Ongoing Operations**
 - *Safety and security plans likely to ensure a safe environment for people and property that corresponds with the core elements of the state-mandated school safety plan and the requirements in statute and regulation.*

Financial Plan

- *There is appropriate segregation of financial duties which align to organizational chart and job descriptions.*
- *Control systems ensure that only allowable expenses will be made and that all expenses will be coded appropriately.*
- *School level budget priorities are consistent with the operator’s model, including but not limited to: educational program, staffing, and facility*
- *Both school and network level budgets present balanced, realistic, evidence-based revenue and expenditure assumptions (including, if applicable, any plan to incur and repay allowable debt)*
- *Sufficient detail and specificity of assumptions for ALL budget line items to allow for the assessment of fiscal viability*

Addendum

- **Leadership For Expansion**
 - *Leadership job descriptions present a clear allocation of duties based on NDE and general state reporting and compliance requirements, including but not limited student information system management and the duties contained in the Reporting Requirements manual and current NAC and NRS.*
 - *Comprehensive leadership recruitment and development plan for sourcing new leadership; little if any use of passive methods such as internet job boards.*
- **Scale Strategy**
 - *The plan to scale the model to new sites is adequately resourced and staffed appropriately.*
 - *Includes plan to infuse NV schools with the essential elements of the organization’s model.*
 - *Organization has sufficient infrastructure (or plan to develop same) to support the proposed network of schools, including shared services and the costs associated with them.*
 - *Clear, appropriate delineation of roles and responsibilities between the management organization and the school sites.*
- **School Management Contracts**
 - *Clearly outlines the roles/responsibilities of the EMO/CMO in the year prior to the school’s opening. The committee to form provides a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that lists specific service agreements for this period of time.*