

# STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY



## 2020 CHARTER SCHOOL REQUEST FOR AMENDMENT TO CHARTER CONTRACT APPLICATION

For the: **Explore Academy - Las Vegas**

Date Submitted: 5/4/21

Current Charter Contract Start Date: June 13, 2019

Charter Contract Expiration Date: June 13, 2025

Key Contact: Justin Baiardo

Key Contact title: Executive Director - Explore Learning Network

Key Contact email and phone: baiardo@exploreacademy.org 505-306-5283

Date of School Board approval of this application: Pending - 5/15/21

This Request For Amendment (RFA) is submitted to request a contract amendment regarding (place an "X" to the right of the specific RFA type(s) you are applying for):

**Enrollment: Expand Enrollment in Existing Grade Level(s) and Facilities**\_\_

A)

## **B) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **School Overview**

#### **1. Identification of the school, its location(s), enrollment(s) (most recent ADE quarter), brief history, brief description of its board members and key leadership team members**

Explore Academy Las Vegas is a charter middle and high school that will serve grades 6-12 when fully enrolled. The school will open its doors in August, 2020 and serve the North Las Vegas community. The permanent site is currently planned to open in the zip code 89032. The projected enrollment for the 2020-2021 school year is 330 students, serving 120 students in 6th grade, 110 in 7th, and 100 in 9th.

The Explore Learning model was created by Justin Baiardo, an experienced educator in New Mexico and the current Executive Director of the Explore Learning Network. The choice theory model of education, which underlies the philosophy of Explore Academy, is focused on turning each student into an active learner who will increasingly become responsible for his or her own education. By allowing each student to choose and personalize his or her own educational pathway from an exceptionally diverse set of course offerings, students become more active, empowered and successful learners.

The Explore Academy philosophy uses electives to a level previously unseen in public education by incorporating the idea of a differentiated curriculum to provide all students, no matter their background, with a diversity of educational choices from which they can create individualized, custom educational pathways. Students are held to specific requirements which align to state standards; however, rather than learn objectives through longer, semester-based courses, Explore Academy uses month-long seminars to focus on fewer objectives within each learning module. What was previously a semester or year-long class is now broken up into several smaller seminars which collectively cover the same academic standards.

The diversity of the school and its curriculum come in the manner in which these seminars are delivered. Rather than providing a single option (the traditional manner of teaching), Explore Academy teachers create different versions or themes (“flavors”) of each seminar that differentiate the way in which the seminar can be offered to students. It is from this diversity that students can choose the manner in which they are educated. Specific themes for the seminar flavors, and their prominent strategies, are developed through the creativity of the school’s teachers and will be advertised to students so that they may choose the themes through which they receive their education. As students move through their seminar requirements, they come to create an education that is both unique and individualized. When students feel empowered by, engaged in, and excited about their education, the impact is felt throughout their community and the educational landscape begins to shift.

The central component of the Explore Academy model is the freedom for students to choose the manner in which they receive their education, thus shifting the focus from educating a large group in one particular manner to identifying each student as an individual, and thus allowing for a personalization of one’s education based on each individual’s unique academic strengths, passions, and interests. By utilizing shorter periods of instruction which allow for choice at each monthly junction, and compounded by the Explore Academy course catalog

consisting of over seven hundred flavor offerings, the combination of choices one can make ensures that no two students will ever share the same educational pathway. Explore Academy could exist for 10,000 years and no two students will ever share the same curricular experience!

The leadership team for Explore Academy Las Vegas includes the school leader, the governing board, and the staff of Explore Learning Network. The school leader, Gretchen Larsen, is an experienced educator and Ryan Fellow who has dedicated her life to serving students in the Clark County area. Justin Baiardo, founder of the Explore Learning model, is the leader of the Explore Learning Network team and provides experience and support across all aspects of school operations including finances, curriculum, educational model, governance, etc. Elisha Varela is the Director of Operations and works closely with Mr. Baiardo to provide school supports in areas such as compliance, accountability, student data, and other areas of operation in addition to leading the English content area. Kimberly DiMiceli is a highly experienced educator and teacher leader and is the Director of Instruction for Explore Learning Network. She provides all teacher training, professional development, and curricular/instructional support to the school in addition to leading the Social Studies content area. Felicia Boatman is the Director of Logistics, providing master scheduling support, student data analysis, and teacher training in addition to leading the Mathematics content area. Laura Carrica is the Science content area lead and she also works in conjunction with other ELN staff to provide teacher, administration, and student support services.

The governing board for Explore Academy Las Vegas has five members who are deeply passionate about education in the Las Vegas area and providing high quality options to students and families. Ron Coe, Board President, is a TFA alum educator and investor with experience in educational policy. Rachelle Luna, Vice President, is a government acquisition and contract specialist with in-depth knowledge of legal processes and procurement procedures. Asbury Edens, Secretary, is a former teacher of 15 years and program manager for before and after school care and is connected to students and families across the county. Matthew Haggerty is a corporate lawyer in Las Vegas with a background and degree in education. Annette Dawson Owens is an education advocate who is familiar with district and charter schools across Nevada.

**2. Statement and overview of the mission and vision**

MISSION

Explore Academy will provide each student with a personalized educational experience through the power of student choice, allowing each student to create a unique educational pathway in preparation for a college future.

VISION

Explore Academy is a college preparatory school which will serve grades 6 to 12. Its core academic philosophy and overall vision are based on the idea of a differentiated curriculum in utilizing an expansive set of electives to provide students equal opportunity for choice in their learning, all the while empowering them with the freedom to create unique and individualized educational pathways.

**3. Specific statement of the request**

The Board of the above named charter school, operating under a current contract with a start date of June 13, 2019 and a six-year expiration date of June 13, 2025 requests that the SPCSA approve this request to amend its charter school contract with the SPCSA regarding the following (check all that apply):

6. Enrollment: Expand Enrollment in Existing Grade Level(s) and Facilities

Attach a copy of the document(s), including minutes, confirming approval of the RFA.

**4. A summary explanation of the reasons that the charter school is seeking to make this specific requested change.**

The charter school is seeking an amendment in order to expand its grade level sizes to adhere to its original enrollment projection five-year plan. This projection had been adjusted due to the COVID pandemic, with the school having to decrease its enrollment goals in accordance with the challenges facing the school during the pandemic.

The amendment request approved in July of 2020, prior to opening in the fall of 2020, set the enrollment cap at 150 students for that year.

The school has rebounded in its enrollment process and is currently projecting the following enrollment cap for the remaining four years of its contract with 350 students projected for this coming fall (2021):

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
6th Gr	100	120	120	120
7th Gr	80	110	110	110

<b>8th Gr</b>	70	90	100	100
<b>9th Gr</b>	70	80	100	100
<b>10th Gr</b>	30	70	90	90
<b>11th Gr</b>		40	80	80
<b>12th Gr</b>			30	70
<b>TOTAL</b>	350	510	630	670

**5. Description of proposed target model and target communities**

We are not requesting a new target model or target community. The educational model and target communities remain as described in the application.

**6. Statement of outcomes you expect to achieve across the network of campuses**

Explore is a single campus.

**7. Key components of your educational model for the expanded school**

The model remains as described in the application and charter and there is no school expansion proposed.

**8. The values, approach, and leadership accomplishments of your school or network leader and leadership team**

As mentioned above, the Explore Learning model is centered around student choice and accountability, leading to the success of all students as they progress down their individual educational pathways. The approach is quite unique, with standards-based grading and eight shorter learning modules in place of the two traditional semesters seen in other models. Additionally, with all seminars (classes) built around creative flavors, students are offered choices that keep them engaged and challenged. The leadership team has over 70 years of combined experience in education, and the Explore Learning Network team operates a highly honored campus in New Mexico using the same educational model and structure.

**9. Key supporters, partners, or resources that will contribute to your expanded school's success**

There is no proposed expansion, but the key supporters of the school include the City of North Las Vegas, Opportunity 180, Accelerate Institute, TFA alumni, local community centers, and the Explore Learning Network. These supporters, as well as our wonderful students and families, will continue to contribute to the success of the school.

**NOTE**

1. **For all remaining General Requirements Sections:** Complete and submit all RFAs by answering remaining General Requirements Section questions.
2. **Indicate “No change” for any below requested response that has not changed from your charter school contract.**
3. **Indicate “N/A” for any below requested response in this General Requirements Section that is not applicable to your request. Applicants do not need to respond “N/A” to any Specific Requirements RFA section for which they are not applying.**

## **B) MEETING THE NEED**

### **TARGETED PLAN**

- (1) Identify the community you wish to serve as a result of the expansion or RFA and describe your interest in serving this specific community.

**NO CHANGE** from the original application.

- (2) Explain how your expansion model or RFA, and the commitment to serve this population, including the grade levels you have chosen, would meet the district and community needs and align with the mission of the SPCSA.

**NO CHANGE** from original application.

### **GROWTH RATE AND RATIONALE**

- (1) Describe the school’s six-year growth plan for developing new schools in Nevada and other states. Please describe the proposed scope of growth over the next 6 years, including both the schools that the campuses the school has already been approved to open, those it is currently applying to open and any additional campuses that it anticipates applying to open in the next six years (number of campuses, locations, proposed six-year enrollment projections, and grade configuration/type of schools).

- a. Provide a rationale for the proposed six-year growth plan; for example, how the school determined the appropriate pace and scope of the proposed growth and why the school is well-positioned to implement the growth plan. If locating in a new community within your present county of location or a new county within Nevada, please explain the rationale for the geographic expansion. If planning to operate new campuses in other states, please explain the rationale for that expansion.

While the initial amendment request changed the school’s projection for its first year of operation, for years 2-5, the enrollment trajectory projects that the school remain adhered to its original projections, albeit with the skipping of its first year due to COVID circumstance. The enrollment projections are shown below:

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
<b>6th Gr</b>	100	120	120	120
<b>7th Gr</b>	80	110	110	110
<b>8th Gr</b>	70	90	100	100
<b>9th Gr</b>	70	80	100	100
<b>10th Gr</b>	30	70	90	90
<b>11th Gr</b>		40	80	80
<b>12th Gr</b>			30	70
<b>TOTAL</b>	350	510	630	670

(2) Specifically identify the key risks associated with this growth plan and describe the steps the school is taking to mitigate these risks. Respondents should demonstrate a sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the challenges of replication in general and as they relate specifically to their school growth plans based on current and historic experience of charter school management organizations and similar types of multi-site social enterprises and non-profit and for-profit organizations. The response should detail specific risks and explain how the school will minimize the impact of each of these risks, and ideally provide contingency plans for them.

In projecting a significant increase from one year to the next, as this amendment request entails, there is risk in the school under-enrolling and thus missing its projection mark. To help address this risk the school has worked diligently to use its enrollment data thus far to project forward. At the time of this writing, the school is projecting roughly 500 student applications for the coming year. With the inclusion of the 120 students already enrolled, the projection of 350, or an addition of 230 students, seems reasonable as a conservative estimate.

(3) Discuss lessons learned during the school's past replication efforts and those of any replicated school or organization from another jurisdiction. For example: specifically identify each challenge encountered and how the school addressed them, as well as how the school would minimize such challenges for the proposed campuses.

NO CHANGE from original application

**PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

(1) Describe the role to date of any parents, neighborhood, and/or community members involved in the proposed expansion of the school.

**NOT APPLICABLE**

(2) Describe how you will engage parents, neighborhood, and community members from the time that the application is approved through the opening of the new campus(es) or grade levels. What specific strategies will be implemented to establish buy-in and to learn parent priorities and concerns during the transition process and post opening?

**NOT APPLICABLE**

(3) Describe how you will engage parents in the life of the expanded school (in addition to any proposed governance roles). Explain the plan for building family-school partnerships that strengthen support for learning and encourage parental involvement. Describe any commitments or volunteer activities the school will seek from, offer to, or require of parents.

**NOT APPLICABLE**

(4) Discuss the community resources that will be available to students and parents at the expanded school. Describe any new strategic partnerships the expanded school will have with community organizations, businesses, or other educational institutions that are part of the school's core mission, vision, and program other than dual-credit partners discussed in subsequent sections. Specify the nature, purposes, terms, and scope of services of any such partnerships, including any fee-based or in-kind commitments from community organizations or individuals that will enrich student-learning opportunities. Include, as an **Attachment**, existing evidence of support from new community partners such as letters of intent/commitment, memoranda of understanding, and/or contracts.

**NOT APPLICABLE**

(5) Describe the school's ties to and/or knowledge of the target community. How has the school learned from and engaged with this community to date? What initiatives and/or strategies will you implement to learn from and engage the neighborhood, community, and broader city/county?

NO CHANGE from original application

(6) Identify any organizations, agencies, or consultants that are partners in planning and expanding the school, along with a brief description of their current and planned role and any resources they have contributed or plan to contribute to the school's development. If the school is new to this county, describe how your previous work has prepared you to establish relationships and supports in this new community.

**NOT APPLICABLE**

## **C) ACADEMIC PLAN**

### **MISSION & VISION**

The mission of your school should describe the purpose of your school, including the students and community to be served and the values to which you will adhere while achieving that purpose. The vision of your school should describe what success looks like for students, for the school as a whole, and for any other entities that are critical to your mission. The mission and vision statement should align with the purposes of the Nevada charter school law and the mission of the State Public Charter School Authority and serves as the foundation for the entire proposal.

Explain whether the proposed mission and vision for the school/network is different from the existing school's mission and vision and how they differ. Describe the reasoning behind any modifications.

Explain whether the mission and vision outlined will replace the current mission and vision of the charter holder, or if the school proposes to complement a broader organizational mission and vision with campus or grade-level specific variants. How will the entity as a whole ensure consistency and coherence of its mission and vision?

**NO CHANGE** from original application

### **CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN**

The framework proposed for instructional design must both reflect the needs of the anticipated population and ensure all students will meet or exceed the expectations of the Nevada Academic Content Standards.

(1) Historical Performance

**NO CHANGE** from original application

(2) Academic Vision and Theory of Change

**NO CHANGE** from original application

### (3) Performance Management

**NO CHANGE** from original application

#### **SCHOOL STRUCTURE: CALENDAR AND SCHEDULE**

a) Discuss the annual academic schedule for the school, including the calendar for the proposed new grades. Explain how the calendar reflects the needs of the student population and the educational model.

**NO CHANGE** from original application

b) Describe the structure of the school day and week for both the proposed new grades and for existing grades. Include the number of instructional minutes/hours in a day for core subjects such as language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Note the length of the school day, including start and dismissal times. Explain why the school's daily and weekly schedule will be optimal for the school model and for student learning. Provide the minimum number of hours/minutes per day and week that the school will devote to academic instruction in each grade.

**NO CHANGE** from original application

c) Describe your goal for student attendance and explain how you will ensure high rates of student attendance. Who will be responsible for collecting and monitoring attendance data? What supports will be in place to reduce truancy and chronic absenteeism?

**NO CHANGE** from original application

#### **DISTANCE EDUCATION**

(Distance Education Expansion Amendments) A charter school that wishes to provide distance education (online, virtual, cyber, etc.) courses and/or programs (NRS 388.820-388.874 and NAC 388.800-388.860) must submit a distance education application to the Nevada Department of Education prior to or in conjunction with its amendment request to the SPCSA. For applicants who do not propose to offer a program of distance education or who already have approval to operate such a program, please provide a brief statement explaining that the questions in this section are not applicable.

**NOT APPLICABLE** - We are not seeking a distance education expansion amendment

#### **PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS**

(All Operators Currently Operating or Proposing to Operate Pre-K). A charter school that wishes to provide pre-kindergarten services to students who will later enroll in its K-12 programs must apply separately to the Nevada Department of Education to offer education below the kindergarten level following charter approval. Approval to

offer pre-kindergarten cannot be guaranteed. Consequently, revenues and expenditures related to pre-kindergarten should not be included in the initial charter application budget. Please note that state-funded pre-kindergarten programs are not directed through the state Distributive Schools Account for K-12 education. In addition to a limited amount of state pre-kindergarten funding available through the Department of Education, the SPCSA is also a sub-recipient of a federal grant to expand early childhood services in certain high-need communities through programs approved by NDE. Applicants are encouraged to review resources available at [http://www.doe.nv.gov/Early\\_Learning\\_Development/](http://www.doe.nv.gov/Early_Learning_Development/). For applicants who do not propose to offer pre-kindergarten, please provide a brief statement explaining that the questions in this section are not applicable.

**NOT APPLICABLE** - Explore Academy Las Vegas is a 6-12 school and is not seeking to add pre-k programs

### **HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS AND POSTSECONDARY READINESS**

*(New High School Amendments Only)* High schools approved by the SPCSA will be expected to meet or exceed Nevada graduation requirements. For operators who do not propose to operate a high school program during the initial charter term or who already have approval to operate a high school, please provide a brief statement explaining that the questions in this section are not applicable.

**NOT APPLICABLE** - We are not seeking to change our high school approval

### **SPECIAL POPULATIONS**

Pursuant to State and federal law, SPCSA schools are required to serve the needs of all students in special populations. Beginning in the 2017-18 school year, the State of Nevada will switch to a weighted formula for special education.

For the first time, this will provide for equitable special education funding across all Nevada public schools. Over time, this will necessitate current SPCSA-sponsored charter schools moving from a defined continuum of service to a broader continuum of services. All operators submitting amendment requests to the SPCSA after the conclusion of the 2015 Legislative Session should plan on offering students a broad continuum of services.

The SPCSA operates under the following principles with regards to special populations of students:

SPCSA schools serve all eligible students. SPCSA schools do not deny the enrollment of any student based on needs or disability.

1. SPCSA schools are to ensure streamlined access for all students requiring special programs.
2. SPCSA schools develop programs to support the needs of their students.
3. SPCSA schools do not counsel or kick any students out.
4. SPCSA schools utilize best practices to expose students to the most inclusive environments appropriate.
5. If needed, an SPCSA school is responsible for developing more restrictive placements to meet the needs of the highest needs students, including but not limited to clustered placements in consortium with other charter schools.
6. SPCSA schools are responsible for providing high functioning, trained special education teams, which focus on student advocacy and high expectations. IEP teams (including school's leadership) make placement decisions at IEP meetings. Decisions are made based on evidence/data to support what is best for the student.

## Special Education

- (1) Track Record: Please explain the extent to which the board and leadership team (instructional leader, etc.) has experience working to achieve high academic outcomes of students with disabilities, including students with mild, moderate, and severe disabilities.

**NO CHANGE** from original application

- (2) Identification: Describe in detail the school's Child Find process. How will the school identify students in need of additional supports or services?
  - a) (*Elementary Schools Only*) How will the school accurately identify students prior to and following enrollment (e.g., those who require pre-school special education and related services) and in the early grades (PreK, K, 1, or 2) for appropriate services?

**NOT APPLICABLE**

- b) (*Middle and High Schools*) How will the school identify and serve students who require special education services and develop transition plans?

**NO CHANGE** from original application

- (3) (*All Schools*) How will the school handle over-identification of students as having a disability that qualifies them for special education services? What will be the process to transition a student out of special education who has been incorrectly identified as having a disability in the past?
  - a) Continuum of Services: How will the school provide a broad continuum of instructional options and behavioral supports and interventions for students with a range of disabilities? Specifically describe how students with severe intellectual, learning, and/or emotional disabilities will be served. Provide a chart which graphically illustrates the continuum of services which identifies, by disability and level of severity, the means by which students with disabilities will be able to receive an appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment (note—this graphic may be created using a commercial program like Microsoft Visio or a free or low-cost internet-based solution such as Lucidchart). Identify the resources, personnel (including administrative responsibilities), and direct and related services the school is likely to provide both within general education classrooms and in other settings (e.g., collaborative team teaching (CTT), Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS), speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, counseling, etc.) as well as the services or settings that will be provided through a consortium or other collaborative initiative with other charter schools or through a third party contract.

**NO CHANGE** from original application

- (4) Enrollment: Describe the school's strategy and plan to recruit, enroll, and retain students with disabilities. How will the school proactively address parent and community

perceptions around the availability and appropriateness of the charter school to the needs of students with disabilities?

**NO CHANGE** from original application

(5) General Education Collaboration/Access: How will special education and related service personnel collaborate with general education teachers (e.g., team teaching, team planning, etc.) to ensure that all students are able to access a rigorous general academic curriculum?

**NO CHANGE** from original application

**Staffing:** How will you ensure qualified staffing to meet the needs of students with disabilities across a broad continuum? Note: Federal and Nevada law requires licensure for the special education teachers, related service personnel, and psychologists at all charter schools, including those which are permitted to waive other licensure requirements due to their academic track record.

(1) Staff Development: How does the school plan to train general education teachers to modify the curriculum and instruction to address the unique needs of students with disabilities across a broad continuum?

**NO CHANGE** from original application

(2) Discipline: Explain how the school will protect the rights of students with disabilities in disciplinary actions and proceedings and exhaust all options in order to promote the continuation of educational services in the home school.

**NO CHANGE** from original application

(3) Monitoring: What are your plans for monitoring and evaluating both the progress and success of students who qualify for special education and related services across a broad continuum, and the extent to which your special education program complies with relevant federal and state laws? How will curriculum and instructional decisions be tracked and monitored by IEP teams and school personnel?

**NO CHANGE** from original application

(4) Parental Involvement: What appropriate programs, activities, and procedures will be implemented for the participation of parents of students with a broad range of disabilities?

**NO CHANGE** from original application

(5) For Distance Education Schools: Describe how the school will provide appropriate services in the distance education learning environment to students

with disabilities across a broad continuum. *If you are not proposing to operate a distance education or virtual school, please explain that this is not applicable.*

**NOT APPLICABLE** - We are not seeking a distance or virtual school

## **D) FINANCIAL PLAN**

**This section must be completed for all applications.**

(1) Describe the systems and processes by which the school will manage accounting, purchasing, payroll, and audits. Specify any administrative services expected to be contracted for the school and describe the criteria and procedures for the selection of contractors and the mechanism by which the board will monitor and hold the contractor responsible for providing such services.

**NO CHANGE** from original application

(2) Present a budget narrative including a detailed description of assumptions and revenue estimates, including but not limited to the basis for revenue projections, staffing levels, and costs. The narrative should specifically address the degree to which the school budget will rely on variable income (e.g., grants, donations, fundraising, etc.). There is no page limit for the budget narrative. Include the following: A detailed discussion of Per-Pupil Revenue: Use the figures provided in developing your budget assumptions.

**The school's budget projection is attached to this amendment request. It specifically shows the increase in students over the next four years to be met with a proportional increase in teaching and support staff (see table below) to address the needs of an increasing population.**

### **Teaching Staff Increase**

	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
<b>ENGLISH</b>	4	5	6	7
<b>MATH</b>	5	6	7	8
<b>SCIENCE</b>	4	5	6	7
<b>SOCIAL STUDIES</b>	4	5	6	7
<b>FINE ARTS</b>	1	1	2	2

PHYS EDUC	1	2	2	2
FOREIGN LANG	1	2	2	2
TOTAL	20	26	31	35

The funding source assumed in the projections takes into account the conventional state funding sources, as assumed in the projection calculator. The projections do not include any additional revenue sources including grants, donations, fundraising, etc.

Given the assumptions for staffing as well as student enrollment, the budgets for each year show a surplus for each year.

- (3) Submit a completed financial plan for the proposed school

The school’s financial plan is described in the budget narrative (above) and the budget projection worksheet (attached).

- (4) Submit a detailed budget for the operator at the network level

**NO CHANGE** from original application

- (5) Provide historical financial documents for any affiliated CMO from another state or any EMO providing services to the school, including audited financials for each school operated by the affiliate as well as any other campus by campus financial evaluations conducted by charter school authorizers. At least three years of school financial audits are required for any school operating for three years or longer. Such financials must be provided as converted PDF documents to ensure accessibility.

**NO CHANGE** from original application

- (6) Complete the audit data worksheet in **Attachment \_\_\_**. In the info tab, please identify any schools or campuses listed under the student achievement tab for which, pursuant that relevant state’s charter law, financial data is consolidated for reporting and auditing purposes in the independent audits provided in **Attachment \_\_\_**.

**NO CHANGE** from original application

- (7) Provide a six-year development plan that addresses the annual and cumulative fundraising need at the network and school levels including a description of the staff devoted to development. The plan should include a history of the school’s fundraising outcomes and identify funds that have already been committed toward fundraising goals. The plan should also identify the role of the members of the board, particularly as relates to give/get requirements, and should demonstrate alignment with the expectations for board members discussed elsewhere in the amendment request. If funds are raised at a

partner organization level, describe the methodology to be used in allocating funds to the school and the proposed campuses. If the school has not raised any funds to support its programming to date and the budget does not include any fundraising activity, please explain that this question is not applicable to your school.

**NO CHANGE** from original application

(8) Describe the campus, school, and any management organization distinct responsibilities in the financial management and oversight of the proposed campuses, including, but not limited to, their respective roles in overseeing or implementing internal controls and in making financial management decisions including budget development. Detail the process and frequency by which key financial information is communicated to and reviewed by the various organizations and different levels of leadership and governance.

**NO CHANGE** from original application

## **E) OPERATIONS PLAN**

Indicate “No Change” to the sections or subsections below, where applicable. Otherwise, all applications require completion of this section.

### 1. Historical performance

- (a) Performance Data: schools are only eligible to complete the amendment request and business plan if the existing schools meet the Authority’s eligibility criteria; these criteria reflect a proven academic track record of success with Nevada students and our operating expectations or similar performance in another state. Please provide a narrative demonstrating that the school meets the organizational criteria for approval.

**NO CHANGE** from original application - The Explore Learning Network and its school, Explore Academy, in New Mexico has shown exceptional success and continues to be one of the highest performing schools in the state, traditional or charter. The success of the Explore Learning model and the track record of the founding team provides high levels of support and compliance capacity for Explore Academy Las Vegas.

- (b) Interventions: Please explain any past organizational/compliance performance that has not met expectations. How did the governing body diagnose the under-performance, how were appropriate intervention(s) determined by the governing body, how are they being implemented by staff, and how is the governing body monitoring implementation of the interventions on a monthly basis?

**NOT APPLICABLE**

(c) What are the key areas in which the existing school or schools/campuses need to improve, as determined by the governing body, and what are the priorities to drive further success?

**NOT APPLICABLE**

2. Organization governance structure & board development:

**NO CHANGE** from original application

3. Organization charts and decision-making authority:

**NO CHANGE** from original application

4. Describe the proposed organizational model; include the following information:

**NO CHANGE** from original application

5. Describe the leadership team's individual and collective qualifications for implementing the multi-site school design and business and operating plan successfully, including capacity in areas such as:

**NOT APPLICABLE**

6. Explain who is responsible for school leader coaching and training and what those processes will look like in action. Please include any existing competencies used for school leader selection and evaluation, if available (provide as an **Attachment** ).

**NO CHANGE** from original application

7. Explain your school leader's role in the successful recruitment, hiring, development and retention of a highly effective staff.

**NO CHANGE** from original application

8. Explain your campus instructional leader's role in providing instructional guidance and school culture guidance. How will the leadership team work in support of the campus instructional leader's guidance?

**NO CHANGE** from original application

9. What systems are in place in your leadership team structure to ensure redundancies in knowledge and skill?

NO CHANGE from original application

## 2. LEADERSHIP FOR EXPANSION

a) Describe the operator's current or planned process for recruiting and training potential network leaders. Explain how you have developed or plan to establish a pipeline of potential leaders for the network as a whole. If known, identify candidates already in the pipeline for future positions.

NO CHANGE from original application

b) Identify the proposed regional director candidate, if applicable, and explain why this individual is qualified to lead the expansion of the organization (provide a resume as an **Attachment\_**). Summarize the proposed leader's academic and organizational leadership record. Provide specific evidence that demonstrates capacity to design, launch, and manage a high-performing charter school network.

NOT APPLICABLE

c) If a regional director candidate has not yet been identified, provide the job description (as an **Attachment\_**) or qualifications and discuss the timeline, criteria, and recruiting and selection process for hiring the regional director.

NOT APPLICABLE

## 3. STAFFING

a) **Complete and submit a working copy of the RFA Staffing & Enrollment Worksheets Excel file.** indicating projected staffing needs for the proposed campuses over the next six years. Schools should also complete the second table outlining projected staffing needs for the entire network over the next six years. Include full-time staff and contract support that serve the network 50% or more. Change or add functions and titles and add or delete rows as needed to reflect organizational plans.

NO CHANGE from original application

## 4. HUMAN CAPITAL STRATEGY

Describe your strategy, plans, and timeline for recruiting and hiring teachers for a multi-site charter school. Explain key selection criteria and any special considerations relevant to your school design.

**NO CHANGE** from original application

## **5. SCALE STRATEGY**

**NOT APPLICABLE**

## **6. STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT**

Like all public schools, public charter schools must be open to any such child, regardless of that child's race, gender, citizenship, or need for accommodations or special education services. Thus, recruitment and enrollment practices should demonstrate a commitment to providing all students equal opportunity to attend the school, and help schools avoid even the appearance of creating barriers to entry for eligible students.

- a. Explain the plan for student recruitment and marketing for the new campuses that will provide equal access to interested students and families, including how the school will comply with the requirements of SB208 (2015 session). Specifically, describe the plan for outreach to: families in poverty; academically low-achieving students; students with disabilities; and other youth at risk of academic failure. For schools which are giving one or more statutorily permissible admissions preferences pursuant to NRS 386.580 or SB390 (2015 session), please indicate if you plan to focus your student recruitment efforts in specific communities or selected attendance areas.

**NO CHANGE** from original application

- b. Provide a detailed discussion of the school's track record in recruiting and retaining students that reflect the ethnic, socio-economic, linguistic, and special needs diversity of the current charter school and each campus to at least the level reflected by the attendance zones where the charter school will operate facilities before approving the proposal. Please provide the school's past enrollment and retention performance for all years since the inception of the school broken out by race, ethnicity, language other than English, disability and 504 status, and eligibility for free and reduced priced lunch both as a school and in comparison, to the school's current zoned schools.

**NO CHANGE** from original application

- c. Detail how the school's programmatic, recruitment, and enrollment strategies are designed to recruit, enroll, and retain a student population that is representative of the zoned schools which prospective students would otherwise attend in the community. Schools which do not currently represent their communities based on the data identified above and are not serving an at-risk population are expected to add several of the following programmatic, recruitment, and enrollment strategies to merit approval: (1) participation in state-funded pre-K programs (including federal pre-K) for low-income students; (2) substituting online and social media marketing which advantages affluent and well-connected populations with a community-based, grassroots campaign which targets high need populations in the community, including aggressive door-to-door outreach and publishing marketing materials in each language which is spoken by more than 5 percent of families within each attendance zone; (3) an explicit commitment to serving a broad continuum of students with disabilities and the expansion of programs, including cluster programs or consortia, to meet the needs of a broad spectrum of student needs; (4) a weighted lottery<sup>4</sup> which provides additional opportunities for specific target populations to be admitted to the school in a

manner consistent with state and federal law; and (5) other enrollment policies and strategies which have had a demonstrated track record of success in dramatically increasing the diversity of student populations in a high achieving charter school to at least the poverty, disability, and ELL profile of the zoned school.

**NO CHANGE** from original application

d. What is the enrollment calendar for both the first year of operation and subsequent years of operation? Please specify the dates on which the school will begin accepting applications and how long the enrollment window will last prior to conducting a lottery.

**NO CHANGE** from original application

e. What enrollment targets will you set and who will be responsible for monitoring progress towards these targets? What is your target re-enrollment rate for each year? How did you come to this determination? What are the minimum, planned, and maximum projected enrollment at each grade level? Outline specific targets in the table below.

**NO CHANGE** from original application

f. What systems will you put in place to ensure that staff members are knowledgeable about all legal enrollment requirements pertaining to special populations and the servicing of particular populations of students and can answer parent inquiries in a manner consistent with the letter and spirit of state and federal law?

**NO CHANGE** from original application

g. Describe the student recruitment plan once your school has opened. In what ways will it be different than your pre-opening year, in terms of the strategies, activities, events, persons responsible and milestones? How will the school backfill vacancies in existing grades?

**NO CHANGE** from original application

h. Complete the following tables for the proposed school to open in 2019-20. Schools applying for multiple campuses must complete enrollment summary tables for each school campus opening in fall 2019 and fall 2020.

**NO CHANGE** from original application

## **7. BOARD GOVERNANCE**

**NO CHANGE** from original application or most recent amendment.

## **8. INCUBATION YEAR DEVELOPMENT**

**NOT APPLICABLE**

9. SCHOOL MANAGEMENT CONTRACTS

NOT APPLICABLE

10. SERVICES

NOT APPLICABLE

11. ONGOING OPERATIONS

NOT APPLICABLE

# SPECIFIC RFA SECTIONS

## Facility RFAs

### 10. RFA: Occupy a Temporary Facility

- a. Complete the general sections above and the general and specific facility sections below
- b. If there is no change to any part of the below specific section or specific subsections from your current contract... state "No change to section" in a row inserted below the heading of the applicable section.
- c. The notice of intent and the RFA must include an explanation of the reasons that the charter school is seeking to make this specific requested change.

## General Facility RFA requirements

1. Describe the school's capacity and experience in facilities acquisition and development, including managing build- out and/or renovations, as applicable. Provide a description and analysis of any construction or development delays which have impacted a school or campus calendar and schedule in the past and a discussion of any organizational or operational adjustments that have been made to prevent recurrence in the future.
2. Identify the entity responsible for acquiring and maintaining school facilities and describe that entity's relationship to both the school and any management organization. If costs related to the facility will be borne by the proposed school's education management organization or a related party such as a foundation, it should identify the level of capital support the organization (or related party) is willing to provide to the school.
3. If a proposed facility **has been** identified and **requires no construction or renovation** prior to the commencement of instruction, please provide:

N/A

- a) The physical address of the facility and supporting documentation verifying the location, including the Assessor's Parcel Number and a copy of the Assessor's Parcel Map for the proposed facility.

b) A copy of the current deed on the property (if the school owns the facility) or a copy of the proposed lease or rental agreement noting any additional square footage to be leased.

c) A copy of the proposed purchase and sale agreement or a copy of the proposed lease or rental agreement.

d) A copy of the floor plan of the facility, including a notation of the size of the facility which is set forth in square feet AND an assurance the school will submit final documentation in compliance with NAC 386.3265.

e) The name, address, and full contact information of the current owner of the facility and any proposed landlord and a disclosure of any relationship between the current owner or landlord and the school, including but not limited to any relative of a board member or employee within the third degree of consanguinity or affinity and any connection with an educational management organization, foundation, or other entity which does business with or is otherwise affiliated with the school as

**Disclosure:** *there exists no relationship between the current owner or landlord and the school, including but not limited to any relative of a board member or employee within the third degree of consanguinity or affinity and any connection with an educational management organization, foundation, or other entity which does business with or is otherwise affiliated with the school*

f) A copy of the Certificate of Occupancy

g) Documentation demonstrating that the proposed facility meets all applicable building codes, codes for the prevention of fire, and codes pertaining to safety, health and sanitation as an **Attachment B**.

h) Documentation demonstrating the governing Body has communicated with the Division of Industrial Relations of the Department of Business and Industry regarding compliance with the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) in compliance with NAC 386.3265 as an **Attachment C**.

4. If a proposed facility has **not** been identified or the proposed facility **requires any construction or renovation** prior to the commencement of instruction, please provide:

**NOT APPLICABLE**

5. For schools which are seeking to occupy multiple facilities over several years, please list the number of facilities you project operating in each of the next six years and identify all potential target jurisdiction at the county and municipal levels, including any unincorporated areas.

**NOT APPLICABLE**

6. Please include the organization's plans to finance these facilities, including:

**NOT APPLICABLE**

# EXPLORE ACADEMY

May 3rd, 2021

To the Members of the Nevada State Public Charter School Authority,

The purpose of this letter is to formally request a Good Cause exemption from the SPCSA for an amendment to the school's existing charter contract. As we are in the midst of exiting the COVID epidemic, the Explore Academy team is devoted to adhering to its original plan in educating the students in Las Vegas and North Las Vegas.

Explore Academy, like many schools, has faced challenges in navigating an uncertain terrain during this period. It has extended itself to engage with families and to connect with those parents and students who are interested in the innovative academic model Explore Academy has to offer. Throughout this spring, the school has witnessed its enrollment and student recruitment efforts show a strong rate of family interest and student acceptance into the school's program for the fall of 2021. The school is working to align with its previous enrollment projections, returning to the pace that it originally predicted. As such, the number of students the school projected originally in its first year is what the school is looking to project for this coming year, its second year in operation. Thus is the purpose of this request: to seek approval to increase its enrollment cap to 350 students for this coming year.

We ask that you consider this request so the school may adjust its efforts toward an enrollment it feels is appropriate for the given environment.

Sincerely,



Gretchen Larsen

Explore Academy Head  
Administrator