

Charter School Application Report

Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy Nevada

Memo Regarding Court Ordered Resubmission of Summer 2021 Charter Application Cycle

April 29, 2022

General Information

Proposed Name	Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy Nevada
Proposed EMO/CMO	CMO: SSS Education Corporation
Proposed Mission	To empower and engage students, especially underserved and underrepresented populations, to reach their full potential as global leaders who enhance their communities and world through an inquiry-based STEAM curriculum that emphasizes creativity, collaboration, and innovation.
Proposed Grade Configuration	Opening Year: Kindergarten – 8 th grade Full Scale: Kindergarten – 12 th grade
Proposed Opening	August 2022
Proposed Location	Temporary location for first year: 1840 N. Bruce Street North Las Vegas, NV 89030 ¹
Zip Codes to be Served	89030, 89027, 89032, 89034, 89081, 89101, 89106, 89107, 89110, 89115, 89117, and 89191

Process/Key Dates for Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy

- March 9, 2021 – Notice of Intent is received
- April 12, 2021 – New Charter Application Training
- July 15, 2021 – Application is received
- September 20, 2021 – Clarifying Questions sent to applicant; responses received within 3 business days
- October 7, 2021 - Capacity Interview is conducted²
- November 5, 2021 – Authority denies initial application
- December 16, 2021 – First (December) resubmitted application is received by the Authority
- January 12, 2022 – SPCSA staff discussed first (December) resubmission with the applicant team
- January 28, 2022 – Authority denies first (December) resubmitted application
- March 30, 2022 – SPCSA staff provide Notice of Deficiency to applicant pursuant to order from 8th District Court
- April 13, 2022 – Second (April) resubmitted application received by the Authority
- April 29, 2022 – Second (April) resubmission recommendation is presented to the Authority

¹ This is also the proposed permanent location for grades K-1.

² The Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy capacity interview was conducted virtually as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and space limitations within the SPCSA's offices.

Planned Enrollment Chart³

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
K	24	68	115	115	115	115
1	26	68	115	115	115	115
2	26	68	115	115	115	115
3	26	68	115	115	115	115
4	26	68	115	115	115	115
5	26	56	85	85	85	85
6	28	88	115	115	115	115
7	28	88	115	115	115	115
8	26	76	106	112	112	112
9			84	102	102	102
10				78	102	102
11					78	102
12						78
Total	236	648	1,080	1,182	1,284	1,386

Executive Summary, Process and Recommendation

Background & Process for Initial and First (December) Resubmission

Upon receipt of a charter application during an application cycle, SPCSA staff reviews the submission for completion and ADA compliance. Should an application be deemed complete, it is assigned to a formal review team and moves to the independent review phase. Members of the review team read and rate each application independently and compile a list of clarifying questions in advance of the capacity interview in an effort to gather additional detail and information about the application prior to the interview. After the capacity interview is conducted, review team members rerate each section of the application against the rubric before finalizing a recommendation.

During the November 5, 2021 Authority meeting, SPCSA staff presented the findings of the initial review team and SPCSA staff for the Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy Nevada charter application which was submitted during the 2021 Summer Application Cycle. The initial application was found to exhibit shortcomings within three of the five components of the submitted application. The review team and SPCSA staff found that while the *Academic* and *Financial* plans met the standards, the proposed *Meeting the Need* and *Operations* sections did not meet the standards as outlined in the charter application rubric. Furthermore, the *Addendum* section⁴ required of an applicant that is a charter

³ The second (April) resubmission includes a modified enrollment plan which reduces the first-year enrollment to 236 students. This new plan proposes serving grades K – 8 in the first two years of operations. As a result, 26 8th grade students would enroll for one year, the 2022 – 23 school year, with no high school option the following year. The application provides no rationale for this approach and does not explain what, if any, support may be offered to these students and families.

⁴ In accordance with Assembly Bill 419 from the 2021 Session of the Nevada Legislature, the SPCSA is required to

management organization was also found to not meet the standard. The Authority voted on November 5, 2021 to deny the Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy of Nevada application.

A second review team comprised of SPCSA staff reviewed the first (December) resubmitted Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy Nevada application after it was received on December 16, 2021. The review team approached rating the first (December) resubmission with two primary concentrations:

- To determine if the applicant had corrected the original deficiencies found in the initial application; and
- To verify that the applicant's resubmission did not change the rating of any component the rubric that was determined to previously 'Meet Standard'.

Upon resubmission in December, the review team determined that some deficiencies within the original application had been addressed, and some ratings against the charter application rubric improved as a result of these changes. The applicant restructured the proposed governing board of the school, replacing several members and as a result, the Board Governance subsection was rated as 'Approaches the Standard'⁵. In addition, the first (December) resubmission included more robust evaluation measures for the board to measure and assess the performance of the proposed CMO, SSS Education Corporation. This resulted in the School Management Contracts subsection being rated as 'Meets the Standard'.

While the review team identified progress in the areas listed, it also found that the application had not 'Met the Standard' in a sufficient number of application components to be recommended for approval. The review team found that a number of deficiencies remained within the first (December) resubmitted application. Most notable was the lack of clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of the proposed CMO, particularly as it relates to the day-to-day responsibilities necessary to effectively manage the school. This concern was magnified by recent authorizer action for a school within the SSS Education Network in Arizona, which was directed to enter into a Consent Agreement due to failure to meet operational performance expectations and violation of the school's charter contract and state and federal law⁶.

Additional concerns included the lack of clarity around the leadership team, specifically the selection process and timeline for hiring the selected candidate. There were also concerns with regard to the plan for facilities, the feasibility of the incubation year plan, and several other sections within the charter application rubric. Finally, questions around student demand for the school remained as the applicant had not demonstrated that there was sufficient demand for this proposal outside of the relationship with the operating private school.

consider the academic, financial, and organizational performance of any charter schools that currently hold a contract with the proposed CMO or EMO. This information is evaluated through the Addendum section, which is required for applicants that propose to contract with an EMO or CMO.

⁵ The SPCSA's Recommendation Memo from January 28, 2022 had this section rated as 'Meets the Standard'. Details regarding the change to 'Approaches the Standard' can be found in the Operations Plan section and Appendix of the March 30, 2022 memo outlining the deficiencies.

⁶ On January 10, 2022, the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools (ASBCS) directed its staff to work with legal counsel to develop a consent agreement to address noncompliance with the Board's operational performance expectations, the charter contract, and state and federal law by Phoenix Education Management, LLC (also referred to as Pioneer Technology and Arts Academy of Arizona), which is part of the SSS Education Network, the proposed CMO. More information about those identified issues can be found [here](#). A summary of that meeting can be found [here](#).

Second (April) Resubmission

Following the court order issued by the 8th District Court, on March 30, 2022, SPCSA staff issued an updated Notice of Deficiency, including a memo outlining the deficiencies. On April 8, 2022, SPCSA staff met to confer with the applicant team regarding the deficiencies. On April 13, 2022, the applicant provided the second (April) resubmission which is now before the Authority for consideration. Upon receipt, a third review team made up of SPCSA staff and one external reviewer was assembled. This review team approached rating the second (April) resubmission with two primary concentrations:

- To determine if the applicant had corrected the deficiencies found in the resubmitted application from December of 2021 and outlined in the March 30, 2022 Notice; and
- To verify that the applicant's resubmission did not change the rating of any component the rubric that was determined to previously 'Meet Standard'.

After reviewing the second (April) resubmission, many of the same deficiencies previously identified were found to remain. Overall, the second (April) resubmission was found to exhibit shortcomings within three of the five components of the submitted application. The review team and SPCSA staff found that the *Academic* and *Financial* plans met the standards. However, the review team did identify some concerns and lingering questions as a result of some changes made that are further detailed *Financial* section, but overall found the section to earn a Meets Standard rating.

The *Meeting the Need* section was rated as 'Approaches the Standard' for many of the same reasons previously identified and communicated to the applicant. There remains a lack of clear evidence presented in the application that parents, neighborhood, and/or community members representative of the target population were involved in the development of the plan. Additionally, partnerships remain underdeveloped with the applicant noting that agreements are not in place.

The *Operations* section was rated as 'Approaches the Standard' as many identified deficiencies were not adequately resolved or addressed in the second (April) resubmission. Most noteworthy are the plans and proposed timelines to fill the school leader and staffing positions. Additionally, the incubation year plan raises substantial capacity concerns for both school staff and CMO staff. Finally, there is ambiguity around the roles and responsibilities of CMO and school leadership as it relates to hiring and oversight of staff.

Lastly the *Addendum* section⁷ is required of an applicant that is a charter management organization. The review committee rated this section as 'Approaches the Standard' for a few primary reasons, including questions about the capacity of the proposed CMO to effectively scale and support the proposed school, particularly during the incubation year, the lack of clarity surrounding roles and responsibilities of both CMO and school site employees, and recent organizational performance by an affiliate school in Arizona which has resulted in authorizer intervention.

The review committee did identify two noteworthy improvements within the second (April) resubmission. The applicant team provided sufficient clarity regarding the proposed facility for Year 1, though concerns remain regarding facility plans beyond the first year. Additionally, progress was noted in terms of Student Recruitment and Enrollment as additional intent to enroll forms were provided and the proposed first year enrollment has been significantly reduced.

Overall, however, and as detailed above and throughout this memo, the second (April) submission failed to adequately address many of the identified deficiencies in the March 30, 2022 memo. For these major reasons, SPCSA staff recommends that the Authority deny the Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy Nevada charter school application. A proposed motion can be found on the following page.

⁷ In accordance with Assembly Bill 419 from the 2021 Session of the Nevada Legislature, the SPCSA is required to consider the academic, financial, and organizational performance of any charter schools that currently hold a contract with the proposed CMO or EMO. This information is evaluated through the Addendum section, which is required for applicants that propose to contract with an EMO or CMO.

Proposed motion: Deny the Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy Nevada application as resubmitted during the 2021 Summer Application Cycle based on a finding that the applicant has failed to satisfy the requirements contained in NRS 388A.249(3) in that the applicant has failed to demonstrate competence in accordance with the criteria for approval prescribed by the SPCSA that will likely result in a successful opening and operation of the charter school, and that pursuant to NRS 388A.255(2) the applicant has failed to correct the deficiencies contained in the application identified by the SPCSA.

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, plus an addendum, as outlined below. 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	First (December) Resubmission Rating	Second (April) Resubmission Rating
Meeting the Need	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
Mission and Vision	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
Targeted Plan	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
Parent and Community Involvement	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
Academic Plan⁸	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
Transformational Change	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
Curriculum & Instructional Design	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
Promotion & High School Graduation Requirements	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
Dual Credit Partnerships	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
Driving for Results	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
At-Risk Students and Special Populations	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
School Structure: Culture	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
School Structure: Student Discipline	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
School Structure: Calendar and Schedule	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
Operations Plan	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
Board Governance	Does Not Meet the Standard	Approaches the Standard ⁹	Approaches the Standard
Leadership Team	Does Not Meet the Standard	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
Staffing Plan ¹⁰	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
Human Resources	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard

⁸ The Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy proposal did not contemplate Distance Education or Pre-Kindergarten. Therefore, the corresponding sections of the rubric were not scored.

⁹ The SPCSA's Recommendation Memo from January 28, 2022 had this section rated as 'Meets the Standard'. Details regarding the change to 'Approaches the Standard' can be found in the Operations Plan section and Appendix of the March 30, 2022 memo outlining the deficiencies.

¹⁰ This section was rated as 'Approaches the Standard' in the first (December) resubmission and the March 30, 2022 memo noted that any changes to the enrollment plan would have cascading impacts including, but not limited to the proposed school's budget and staffing plan.

Application Section	Rating	First (December) Resubmission Rating	Second (April) Resubmission Rating
Student Recruitment and Enrollment	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard	Meets the Standard
Incubation Year Development	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
Services	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
Facilities	Meets the Standard	Approaches the Standard ¹¹	Approaches the Standard
Ongoing Operations	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
Financial Plan¹²	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
Addendum	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
Readiness for Growth	Approaches the Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	Does Not Meet Standard
Scale Strategy	Approaches the Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	Does Not Meet Standard
School Management Contracts	Approaches the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
Charter Management Organizations Applying Directly	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard

¹¹ The SPCSA's Recommendation Memo from January 28, 2022 had this section rated as 'Meets the Standard'. Details regarding the change to 'Approaches the Standard' can be found in the Operations Plan section and Appendix of the March 30, 2022 memo outlining the deficiencies.

¹² This section was rated as 'Meets the Standard' in the first (December) resubmission and the March 30, 2022 memo noted that any changes to the enrollment plan would have cascading impacts including, but not limited to the proposed school's budget and staffing plan.

Meeting the Need Section

The Meeting the Need section within the second (April) resubmission did not adequately resolve previously identified concerns, resulting in an overall rating for this section of 'Approaches the Standard'.

Progress was made in demonstrating sufficient student demand for the first year, particularly given the substantial decrease in the proposed first-year enrollment. The applicant has provided intent to enroll forms for approximately 200 students¹³, half of which come from current St. Christopher families. While this aligns with the SPCSA's typical expectations of at least 50% of first-year enrollment, minor concerns remain regarding student interest outside of the relationship with the operating private school since a large portion of the letters of intent are either over a year old or come from families that are connected with the private school.

In addition, there remain concerns about the lack of evidence demonstrating local parent, neighborhood and community involvement in the proposal, as well as a lack of concrete and established partnerships. The applicant states that these proposed partnerships will be more formalized by July, but few specifics around this work are provided. Finally, the second (April) resubmission notes that the proposed school has not finalized a facility beyond the first year of operations or for the remainder of the school's initial term and several of the identified potential facilities are not nearby the first-year location, thus raising questions about how the applicant will ensure the needs of the intended community will be met beyond year one. Given these chief concerns, this section of the second (April) resubmission was rated as 'Approaches the Standard'.

Areas of Strength

- The mission and vision statements of PTAA Nevada are clear, focused, and appear interwoven throughout the application as the school and network seeks to help students be engaged, global leaders by progressing through a STEAM curriculum. The mission statement identifies the role of the school in working to solve the problem that the school seeks to address.
- The application proposes to serve families in a number of zip codes that are identified in the SPCSA Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment as having a large number of one- and/or two-star schools. Some of the demand for the school originates from these zip codes, and the proposed location does appear to align with the geographic component of the Needs Assessment.
- Multiple members of the proposed applicant team appear to have strong ties to the local community. Additionally, the proposed CMO is currently working with a local charter school, giving them a direct tie to Clark County.

Areas of Concern

- During the capacity interview, the applicant team spoke of open houses and forums held both at St. Christopher's as well as other locations to gauge interest in a STEAM program. Nevertheless, it is not clear how the proposed community and prospective parents were involved in developing the plan for how the PTAA model would be implemented in their community. Information from the application signals that many of the outreach and engagement efforts were intended to raise awareness about the proposal rather than to seek input that shaped the proposed program. The first (December) resubmission included general statements about these meetings, but it was not clear that feedback from meetings resulted in concrete modifications or adjustments to the

¹³Within the second (April) resubmission the applicant overstated the demand as many of the surveys and letters of intent are from students who are too old to enroll or are duplicates of other forms. Nevertheless, the applicant has provided letters of intent representing over 50% of the proposed first-year enrollment.

proposal. The second (April) resubmission again included some general statements about surveys to gauge interest and states that due to parent input, "Nursing/Health Careers was included." However, the input survey included in the attachments does not support this assertion as the most closely aligned survey question affirmatively states that the school will offer three pathways, one of which is Pre-Med. Additionally, this suggested input is very specific to the proposed high school program and would only begin to impact the school model starting in the third year of operations. While the surveys conducted may have gathered interest in aspects of the proposed model, the application is lacking evidence of the involvement of parents, neighborhood, and/or community members representative of target population in the development of the plan. More information is needed to understand how parents, the neighborhood, and the community at-large has helped shape the proposal.

- Given the applicant's intent to serve the St. Christopher school community and students residing in the zip codes immediately surrounding the current St. Christopher school, there are concerns that the identified long-term facility options are not nearby to the St. Christopher location that is proposed as a possible location for the first school year. Relocating to one of the identified possible long-term facilities may not align to the needs of the identified community to be served. Within the second (April) resubmission, the applicant indicates that the proposed school would move to a second facility in the second or third year of operation and that kindergarten and first grade would remain at the St. Christopher location indefinitely. If the proposed school did not move in the second year of operation, portables would be added to the St. Christopher site to accommodate the expansion. While the narrative states that the Board would make a decision at a later date as to which option to pursue and the Organization Plan indicates that key activities related to securing additional campuses would occur between October of 2022 and February of 2023, there is little detail provided about how the board will engage the community in this decision and what process the board will use to determine plans for the long-term facility. The fact remains that several of the identified possible long-term facilities are not nearby the St. Christopher location. Additionally, while the applicant indicates that 15-passenger vans will be used to transport students between school locations, the second (April) resubmission does not make it clear that the applicant is aware of statutes, regulations and restrictions that must be followed to provide pupil transportation in Nevada. More information is needed to ensure that transportation is a viable option for the school long-term. Ultimately, it is not clear how the needs of the intended community will be met beyond year one, based on the plans presented.
- While evidence of additional partnerships was provided in the first (December) resubmission, and proposed national partnerships continue to be well-developed, local partnerships appear to be in the early stages. Organizations named in the initial application and first (December) resubmission have the potential to support the needs of the target population, but many letters of support offered limited information about how the organization would directly work with the proposed school. Details such as clear, measurable, time-specific deliverables from the partner which are clearly relevant to the needs of the target population are often not provided. The second (April) resubmission does not provide any additional evidence of community partnerships, instead relisting those organizations that have been included in the original application and first (December) resubmission and committing to formalize MOUs by the end of July without a detailed plan to do so.

- Within the second (April) resubmission, the applicant did not address one of rubric criteria within the *Meeting the Need* section that was identified in the Appendix of the March 30, 2022 memo as criteria had not substantially been met. No additional information was provided regarding the following rubric criteria:
 - *Clear and compelling rationale for the selected community based on academic or demographic need.* For example, it remains unclear as to why the school includes several Mesquite zip codes as part of the primary community it intends to serve.

Academic Section

The Academic section within the initial application was rated as 'Meets the Standard'. The second (April) resubmission provided limited new and/or additional information that would result in any changes to the individual subsections or entire Academic section. As such, the review committee determined that the previous strengths and areas of concerns remained in place within the second (April) resubmission and are detailed again below. This also resulted in a 'Meets the Standard' rating for this section.

Areas of Strength

- The written application describes plans to implement a P-TECH model at the high school, similar to those established through other PTAA schools in Texas. This was reaffirmed through the capacity interview, when the CMO was also able to describe potential avenues for applying for the proposed school to become a recognized P-TECH school, given that this would be the first school of its kind in the State. The proposed academic program would prioritize 21st century skills, emphasize student investigations, offer differentiated individual educational plans, provide a STEAM curriculum, and include project-based and blended learning. The core academic curricula are designed to encourage all students to see interdisciplinary connections between STEAM subjects. The course progression includes computer coding for all students in grades kindergarten through 8th grade. The academic plan presents an innovative educational program with distinguishing features that are supported by evidence of schools currently operating in Texas.
- The proposed CMO has established relationships with national industry partners, Sharp and Microsoft, that can ultimately benefit students as they progress through the proposed model. Both of these partners would assist with the two primary pathways—software development and network administration. As a result of the capacity interview, it appears that these partners are woven into the proposal and can be involved at the proposed school post authorization.
- The application indicates that certifications and associates degrees would be available to students attending the school, in addition to internship opportunities at Sharp as well as the opportunity to work with representatives from Microsoft in the classroom. These pathways demonstrate that the school is promoting college and career readiness, as well as a culture of high expectations.
- The applicant describes a robust teacher development program and schedule, although questions remain about its delivery given the proposed timeline to hire teachers. Teacher development includes preservice training, web-based learning modules, twice weekly in-class coaching sessions, weekly feedback meetings, twice weekly data team meetings, and monthly early release days for additional development. In addition, the proposed school's professional development is connected directly to curriculum, instructional goals and processes, and data-driven decision-making.
- The applicant team provides a comprehensive description of how its MTSS program would support students, including those who are over-age for their grade level. According to the application, PTAA will provide tutoring, advisory and/or college readiness supports, and layered social and emotional supports to students as needed through community partnerships and service providers. Summer school will be offered to high school students who need remediation and/or credit recovery, and those interested in credit acceleration. Furthermore, since the proposed school would offer opportunities to gain real world skills via concurrent community college enrollment and work-based learning experiences, the high school program will provide significant relevancy to struggling learners and those who are over-age and under-credited.

Areas of Concern

- While it appears that most chosen curricula are aligned to Nevada Academic Content Standards, it is not clear how some of the chosen curricula will work simultaneously together and more evidence and information are needed to confirm that all proposed curricula are aligned to the Nevada Academic Content Standards. Within the first (December) resubmission it was not clear whether all final decisions had been made regarding curriculum, however, the second (April) resubmission indicates that curriculum decisions have been finalized, though no further evidence is provided as to alignment or coherence of the proposed curricula.
- The second (April) resubmission does not present a clear assessment plan. The application and first (December) resubmission did not describe a well-defined plan for internal assessments. Conflicting information was presented in the capacity interview from the narrative, and it was not clear that the applicant understood the required K-8 assessments in Nevada other than the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBAC). It remains unclear how the school would effectively implement both Renaissance 360 and NWEA MAP together to effectively measure and monitor individual students, student cohorts, and school level results. In the second (April) resubmission, the applicant states that the proposed school is clear on assessments that will be given to students, will follow all assessment requirements in state law, and will use Renaissance data internally as needed for student success. However, the applicant does not state what grade levels will be assessed on which assessment(s) and how the school will use these two assessments in concert. As presented, the assessment plan is not sufficiently detailed.
- The second (April) resubmission remains unclear regarding the methods by which the school will assess and academically remediate underperforming students. While the application emphasizes the importance of student data, performance goals for specific student groups including students with disabilities, English learners, and students who may be at-risk may not lead to a four- or five-star school as proposed. More information is needed to understand how the proposed school will monitor the performance of these student groups, and if these goals are rigorous enough to lead the school to a high rating under the Nevada School Performance Framework.
- Within the second (April) resubmission, the applicant did not address several rubric criteria within the *Academic* section that were identified in the Appendix of the March 30, 2022 memo as criteria had not substantially been met. No additional information was provided regarding the following rubric criteria:
 - *Internal and mission-specific framework goals are SMART: goals and objectives are specific, measurable, ambitious and attainable, relevant, and time bound.*
 - *Sound plan for measuring and reporting academic performance and progress of students for both individual schools and the network.*

Operations Section

The Operations section within the second (April) resubmission did not adequately resolve previously identified concerns, resulting in an overall rating for this section of 'Approaches the Standard'.

Some improvements were identified within the *Operations* section. Notably, progress was made in demonstrating sufficient student demand for the first year, particularly given the substantial decrease in the proposed first-year enrollment. The applicant has provided intent to enroll forms for approximately 200 students¹⁴, half of which come from current St. Christopher families. While this aligns with the SPCSA's typical expectations of at least 50% of first-year enrollment, minor concerns remain regarding student interest outside of the relationship with the operating private school since a large portion of the letters of intent are either over a year old or come from families that are connected with the private school. Nevertheless, the Student Recruitment and Enrollment section of the application is now rated as 'Meets the Standard.' Additionally, while concerns remain regarding the long-term facility plan, the applicant has clarified that the proposed school would locate within the St. Christopher facility during the first year of operation. Due to concerns regarding the facility after the first year, the Facilities section continues to be rated as 'Approaches the Standard.'

Despite some progress, significant concerns remain about the proposed plan and timeline to identify and fill the school leader role, which are magnified by the shortened incubation year timeframe. These concerns also raise substantial questions about the proposed timeline and plan to hire staff, which is not sufficiently detailed and includes contradictory information about which individual(s) actually have hiring authority for the school staff. Other noteworthy concerns within this section include turnover within the proposed board that has occurred since the original application, a lack of clarity regarding various roles and responsibilities of school and CMO staff, and the available capacity of the CMO staff to effectively execute during the incubation year plan. For these reasons, among others, this section was rated as 'Approaches the Standard'.

Areas of Strength

- The first (December) resubmission provided metrics and processes for evaluating the effectiveness of services provided by the CMO. While questions remain about some specifics, the contract includes measures that the board may use to evaluate services for the school.

Areas of Concern

- Questions remain about the proposed school leadership team, specifically the principal role and proposed regional director of the CMO.
 - The second (April) resubmission does not provide sufficient clarity regarding the process for selecting a principal, the responsible party for doing so, and why this process for recruiting and hiring the school leader will lead to a successful opening given the proposed timeline. In the first (December) resubmission, the applicant indicated that the previously identified principal had been changed to an 'acting principal.' The application rubric calls for a school leader with identified accomplishments related to student performance as well as evidence that the school leader is able to demonstrate strong recruitment, hiring, and teacher development. If a leader has not been identified, the application rubric requires that the proposal include a clear method by which the school will recruit and select a candidate who

¹⁴Within the second (April) resubmission the applicant overstated the demand as many of the surveys and letters of intent are from students who are too old to enroll or are duplicates of other forms. Nevertheless, the applicant has provided letters of intent representing over 50% of the proposed first-year enrollment.

satisfies identified criteria. Based upon the information provided in the original application and the first (December) resubmission, it was unclear whether or not the acting principal would become the principal, and when the governing board anticipated beginning a formal process to identify and hire for the position. Additionally, the acting principal did not appear to possess administrative experience at a high school or a strong background leading the implementation of a STEAM program. While the first (December) resubmission narrative noted that this individual had already begun to receive professional development on the PTAA model, this did not fully address all reservations and added to the confusion about the current state of this important role. In the second (April) resubmission, the applicant states that the board will follow the process outlined in the original application to hire a principal by June 15, 2022 and removes the concept of the acting principal. However, the process for hiring the principal as outlined in the original application does not include details regarding the method by which they will recruit and select a candidate, details which are now critical as the applicant has made clear that there is no longer a proposed principal as there was in both the initial application and first (December) resubmission. The original application only outlines some general steps in the process including developing a hiring committee, recruiting candidates, identifying the strongest candidates and conducting a performance assessment, soliciting stakeholder input, and planning for the transition. No additional details are provided regarding how a candidate would be recruited and selected, especially on such an expedited timeline.

- The roles and responsibilities of the regional director of the CMO and principal remain unclear. Within the original application and first (December) resubmission there was a lack of clarity regarding who would oversee, supervise and coach school staff. While the second (April) resubmission states that the regional director “provides the principal with support needed to implement the PTAA model,” no additional information nor clarification are provided regarding the perceived overlap in these roles. In addition, the second (April) resubmission, adds more confusion regarding the roles and responsibilities for the hiring of staff. In one part of the second (April) resubmission narrative, the applicant states that the principal will be responsible to hire all PTAA staff, but in a second part of the narrative, the same document states that the regional director with principal support are charged with recruiting and hiring all staff. This level of ambiguity regarding this important task is problematic, and is magnified by the possibility that the principal may not be hired until June 15, and the target completion date for staff hiring is July 1. More information is needed to understand how these two roles work together to support the success of the school.
- The proposed governance structure in the second (April) resubmission raises questions about the collective ability of the proposed board to effectively govern the school and provide meaningful oversight. The initial application raised a multitude of concerns with the board governance section, including concerns with the independence and capacity of the board. To address these issues, as part of the first (December) resubmission, the applicant team removed three board members and replaced them with two individuals that reside in the Las Vegas area. However, recent developments raised concerns about the capacity and qualifications of the board and their ability to provide effective governance and meaningful oversight of school:

- One of the five proposed members of the board presented in the first (December) resubmission recently resigned. The second (April) resubmission replaced this member with two new members who are both Nevada residents, bringing the board to six members. While these new members appear to be qualified, a total of four proposed board members have left the board since the July 2021 submission. Stated another way, this means that only three members of the six-person board have remained on the board since the July submission, and four members have left the board in approximately nine months. This level of turnover for an operating school let alone an applicant is highly concerning, and raises questions about those board members who have remained on the board since the time of the application, particularly in light of the short timeline for opening which would require the board to act quickly on a number of pressing decisions and policies to enable the proposed school to open this fall.
 - Information provided to SPCSA staff indicates that one of the proposed board members has posted several items on social media that raise questions about the individual's fitness to serve on a public charter school board. Among other things, the posts include derogatory comments regarding transgender individuals raising concerns about the ability of this individual to lead a public school which is required to develop and uphold policies regarding the rights and needs of persons with diverse gender identities or expressions.
- There are numerous concerns regarding the proposed incubation year plan and organization plan within the second (April) resubmission including the feasibility of proposed timelines, lack of staff capacity to execute the plan, critical deadlines that are quickly approach or have already passed without plans to address these requirements, and the leadership development plan. Ultimately, the incubation plan as presented is not likely to result in a successful opening and operation of the proposed school.
- There are significant concerns about the feasibility of the significantly condensed incubation year plan contained in the second (April) resubmission, particularly in light of the proposed staffing plan. The original incubation plan and organization plan included numerous milestones that had already passed or were quickly approaching. The second (April) resubmitted application includes an updated incubation year plan and organization plan that identifies items that have been completed or are in progress and sets future dates for the completion of outstanding tasks, but the proposed staffing does not appear to enable the school to reach its Year 0 milestones. Of note, there are a large number of tasks to be completed in May, June, and July. The applicant does not appear to have increased staff capacity to accomplish the volume of tasks on a shorter timeline than was originally planned. In addition, there are conflicts between two attachments within the second (April) resubmission as to the available capacity during the incubation year. Ultimately, it's not clear that the incubation year plan at the proposed staffing levels is feasible raising concerns as to whether the plan is likely to result in a successful opening and operation of the proposed school. The proposed timeline to hire a principal also raises significant capacity concerns, both in terms of their responsibilities and the need to hire high-quality teachers. The second (April) resubmission sets a July 1 milestone for hiring all staff, but the original application notes that research shows schools must hire early to get the best teachers. The revised incubation year plan does not ensure that the school will be ready for a successful launch.

- Certain regulatory deadlines for the upcoming school year are quickly approaching or have already passed, such as the April 15 deadline to submit a tentative budget (see NAC 387.720), budget hearings which must occur during the third week in May (see NAC 387.720), and school calendars which are due by May 1. Additionally, school-level grant applications were due to the SPCSA by April 24, 2022, and the SPCSA is required to submit its grant application to the Nevada Department of Education by mid-May to avoid a delay in approval which would result in a black-out period for grant expenditures impacting all sponsored schools. The second (April) resubmission did not outline plans to complete these requirements. Of note, the applicant's first year cash flow statement within the proposed budget assumes federal grant reimbursements during the first quarter of the fiscal year which will not be feasible given the deadlines for grant applications outlined above.
- The revised enrollment timeline within the second (April) resubmission raises substantial concerns both about the accessibility of the proposed student application and enrollment process and the school's financial viability. The incubation year plan from the first (December) resubmission indicated that community outreach and recruitment efforts including direct mailers, online campaigns, and open houses were to occur by March 15, 2022. No evidence was provided that these activities had been completed and it was not clear how and when the proposed school would successfully recruit and enroll students in time for the 2022-23 school year based on the plan presented. Critically, funding for the first quarter¹⁵ of the school year for new charter schools is based on an enrollment audit that is conducted in mid-June. The second (April) resubmission provides an updated incubation year plan showing that the first round of community outreach would occur by May 15, 2022¹⁶ with the second round of outreach would occur by June 15, 2022. Additionally, the incubation year plan proposes a 30-day application period which is proposed to occur simultaneous to the notification period that typically occurs 45 days prior to the application period. It is important to note that alongside the second (April) resubmission, the applicant submitted two requests for good cause exemptions to 1) revise the timeline for required notification to households within a 2-mile radius of the school set forth in NRS 388A.450, effectively eliminating the typical 45-day notification period and providing this concurrently with the open enrollment period, and 2) shorten the 45-day open enrollment period before which a lottery may be conducted for admission to the school to 30 days as set forth in NRS 388A.453. When considering these requests together, PTAA Nevada is effectively proposing a 30-day window for families to be notified of the application for enrollment and to complete that application in contrast to the statutory requirement which outlines a minimum 90-day period broken into two equal parts for 1) notification, and 2) applications for enrollment. The enrollment timeline proposes that the lottery be conducted on June 1, 2022, thereby providing six business days for the school to collect enrollment paperwork from students before the enrollment audit that would determine first quarter funding. For context, most new schools have a two-month window

¹⁵ Funding for the first quarter is later trued-up based on the actual enrollment as of October 1. However, schools with low enrollment numbers during the June enrollment audit typically face significant cashflow challenges during the first quarter.

¹⁶ The incubation year plan actually says May 15, 2021, but this is assumed to be a typo since that date has already passed.

to collect enrollment paperwork and still have students with outstanding paperwork at the time of the audit. Due to these reasons, SPCSA staff does not recommend approval of the requests to revise the timelines for notification and to shorten the open enrollment period.¹⁷ Additionally, key milestones within the incubation year plan are not aligned as the second round of community outreach is set to conclude 15 days after the lottery and five or more days after the enrollment audit would be completed. The incubation year plan has also not been adjusted to ensure sufficient Nevada-based staff to execute this work within a very short period. This concern is compounded by the fact that the stated timeline for hiring a principal is June 15, 2022, after the lottery and enrollment audit have been completed, despite the fact that the incubation year plan lists the school leader as one of two individuals responsible for the execution of the admissions tasks. Because first quarter payments are based on the enrollment audit conducted in mid-June, there is a high likelihood that this plan would result in first quarter payments significantly below the projected enrollment. The proposed budget assumes payment for 75% of the projected enrollment in the first quarter, which does not appear reasonable. Since the cash balance within the first quarter of the school year (August – October) drops to just \$31,000, there is very little room for error. Based on the cash flow presented, if the enrollment came in below 70% of the projected enrollment the school would likely see a shortfall within the first quarter. The plan as presented does not provide confidence that it would lead to a successful opening and operation of the proposed school.

- The second (April) resubmission does not include a comprehensive leadership development plan that is aligned with incubation year and academic goals. The first (December) resubmission stated that the proposed board will secure an MOU with the CMO for services to be provided during the incubation year. The initial application lacked clarity regarding the comprehensive leadership plan aligned to incubation year and academic goals. While a proposed MOU was provided in the first (December) resubmission, it did not provide additional clarity and information on how and when the principal will be trained. The second (April) resubmission also did not provide detail on the training that would be offered, instead listing three topics that will be included: SPCSA policies and procedures, Nevada Department of Education rules and regulations for public schools, and roles and responsibilities of the principal. This does not constitute a comprehensive leadership development plan. Given the very brief period the principal would have for training between June 15 and the beginning of the school year, an intentional development plan would be necessary to ensure a successful opening and operation of the proposed school.
- The four possible long-term facilities identified in the initial application are each at least 3.5 miles and up to 9.7 miles from the possible, first-year facility at St. Christopher. Given the applicant's intent to serve the St. Christopher school community and students residing in the zip codes immediately surrounding the St. Christopher school, there are concerns that relocating to one of these locations may not align to the needs of the identified community to be served. Within the second (April) resubmitted application, the applicant indicates that the proposed school would

¹⁷ In the event that the Authority approves this second (April) resubmitted PTAA Nevada charter application, the Authority should consider approval of both requests with certain conditions because operations of the proposed school would be rendered impossible without some allowances for shortening both the notification and open enrollment periods.

move to a second facility in the second or third year of operation and that kindergarten and first grade would remain at the St. Christopher location indefinitely. If the proposed school did not move in the second year of operation, portables would be added to the St. Christopher site to accommodate the expansion. The narrative states that the Board would make a decision at a later date as to which option to pursue and the Organization Plan indicates that key activities related to securing additional campuses would occur between October of 2022 and February of 2023. However, the second (April) resubmission does not provide a detailed plan and timeline to identify and secure a long-term facility and there is little information provided about how the board will engage the community in this decision and what process the board will use to determine plans for the long-term facility. The fact remains that the identified possible long-term facilities are not nearby the St. Christopher location. Additionally, while the applicant indicates that 15-passenger vans will be used to transport students between school locations, the second (April) resubmission does not make it clear that the applicant is aware of statutes, regulations, and restrictions that must be followed to provide pupil transportation in Nevada. More information is needed to ensure that transportation is a viable option for the school long-term. Ultimately, it is not clear how the needs of the intended community will be met beyond year one and the narrative does not provide a detailed plan for selecting and securing the facility.

- As indicated in the *Addendum* section, there remains a lack of clarity as to who is responsible for hiring staff. The March 30, 2022 memo indicated that the rubric criteria *'articulates process for recruiting and hiring high quality teachers and leaders'* had not been substantially met. The second (April) resubmission fails to provide clarity on the process for recruiting and hiring staff, particularly the roles of the principal and CMO in hiring. The original application indicates that the Superintendent of the CMO and principal will be responsible for final decisions regarding hiring, while other sections of the application state that the Regional Director of the CMO, with support of the principal is charged with recruiting and hiring staff. The second (April) resubmitted application did not resolve this concern. In one place, the narrative indicates that the principal is responsible for hiring staff, but then goes on to say that the CMO staff with principal support will recruit and hire all staff members.
- Within the second (April) resubmission, the applicant did not address several rubric criteria within the *Operations* section that were identified in the Appendix of the March 30, 2022 memo as criteria had not substantially been met. No additional information was provided regarding the following rubric criteria:
 - *Articulates a recruitment and hiring plan that will result in a school staff reflective of the student body.*
 - *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.*
 - *Operations plan includes logical plans for all essential and program-specific non-academic services, including, but not limited to: Staff structure/plan is adequate for the proposed school and aligns with the educational program; lines of authority are clear.*

- Within the second (April) resubmission, the applicant provided some additional information related to a rubric criterion that was identified in the Appendix of the March 30, 2022 memo as having not substantially been met: *'staffing plan matches the proposed budget and is explicitly aligned to both budget narrative assumptions and to budget calculations.'* Specifically, the second (April) resubmission included an updated budget and staffing plan. However, questions about alignment between the budget and staffing plan remain and ultimately it is not clear that the budget supports the proposed model.

Financial Section

The Financial section within the initial application was rated as 'Meets the Standard'. The second (April) resubmission included some adjustments, mainly due to the proposed lower enrollment starting in year one and the corresponding staff cuts which are stated by the applicant to be proportional. As such, the review committee determined that most strengths identified previously remained in place. Additionally, the second (April) resubmission addressed one previous concern related to the proposed Line of Credit. This resulted in a 'Meets the Standard' rating for this section of the second (April) resubmission.

While the overall rating for this section of the second (April) resubmission remained the same, some concerns remain. Specifically, the April submission notes that \$100,000 will be available to the school in addition to the previous grant of \$20,000. However, no evidence was provided for this additional grant. As noted in the *Operations* section, the condensed timeline for the incubation year would likely have significant negative impacts to cash flow projections raising concerns about viability. Nevertheless, this section was rated as 'Meets the Standard'¹⁸.

Areas of Strength

- The CMO has financial expertise to assist the school with financial management, oversight, and day to day operations if needed. This was reiterated during the capacity interview when CMO representatives assisted the proposed board with addressing financial questions and concerns.
- The budget narrative presents a baseline understanding of GAAP principles, and demonstrates a basic understanding of Nevada context and budgeting concepts. The narrative notes that the Board will annually review a three-year budget, historical income and expenses, and a cashflow forecast for the upcoming year.
- Evidence presented in the application indicates that PTAA schools in operation in Texas are performing soundly and meeting financial performance standards.
- The applicant has secured a facility with a favorable lease rate for the first year of operation.

Areas of Concern

- It is not clear that the proposed school will have sufficient revenue and cash on hand based upon information presented in the second (April) resubmission. The first (December) resubmission indicated that PTAA Nevada will have the ability to access a Line of Credit through the proposed CMO. This raised some questions about the ability of the proposed board to hold the CMO accountable for services given that the proposed school would potentially be financially obligated to the CMO as early as the incubation year. The second (April) resubmission alleviated the concern regarding the CMO's role in the line of credit indicating that the proposed school has received a startup grant and would not need to use the line of credit. However, this change raises concerns about revenue and cash in the incubation year. The narrative within the second (April) resubmission states that while the proposed school is expecting revenues from the charter school program grant during the incubation year, and that these funds have not been accounted for in the budget since the grant has not been finalized. Additionally, the applicant indicates that they will have access to a startup grant of \$100,000 and a planning grant of \$20,000 from Opportunity 180

¹⁸ The March 30, 2022 memo noted that while the proposed budget within the first (December) resubmission aligned with key components of the model and proposal, any changes to the proposed enrollment would likely impact projected revenues and would require a revised budget that aligns to the updated proposal, and otherwise meets the standards outlined in the charter application rubric.

during the incubation year plan. While the SPCSA had previously been provided evidence of the \$20,000 planning grant, no evidence has been provided for the \$100,000 startup grant. Projected expenditures during the incubation year are \$79,000 and there is not sufficient evidence that the proposed school will have revenues to support these expenditures. The Charter School Program grant is a reimbursement-based grant, requiring cash to utilize these earmarked funds.

Addendum Section

In accordance with Assembly Bill 419 from the 2021 Session of the Nevada Legislature, the SPCSA is required to consider the academic, financial, and organizational performance of any charter schools that currently hold a contract with the proposed CMO or EMO. Information gathered through the *Addendum Section* examines the past performance of affiliated charter schools, as well as readiness of the CMO or EMO to expand and the specific services that are to be provided to the proposed school. The *Addendum Section* is required for those applications that seek to contract with a CMO or EMO, or are applying for sponsorship directly.

The Addendum section within the second (April) resubmission did not adequately resolve previously identified concerns, resulting in an overall rating for this section of 'Approaches the Standard'. The capacity of the proposed CMO to effectively scale and support the proposed school, including during the incubation year, raises questions and concerns. These are magnified by the lack of clarity surrounding roles and responsibilities of both CMO and school site employees. Additionally, academic performance results from 100 Academy provided in the second (April) resubmission raise questions about the CMOs track record in Nevada. When coupled with the significant compliance concerns arising from a recent school added to the CMO's portfolio, PTAA-Arizona¹⁹, significant questions remain about the CMO's readiness for growth and proposed scale strategy.

Areas of Strength

- While some schools within the PTAA network in Texas are not yet at full scale, and other affiliated schools in Arizona and Colorado do not have performance data, available performance data for sister schools outside of Nevada signal that schools are meeting or exceeding academic performance standards.
- Evidence presented in the application indicates that PTAA schools in operation in Texas are performing soundly and meeting financial performance standards.
- The proposed fee structure for the CMO is clear within the narrative and proposed contract. While the fee is high compared to other CMO/EMOs that operate and support schools in Nevada, the CMO will be supporting, implementing and overseeing many operational pieces of the proposed school. The operations and services outlined in the narrative appear to closely align to the services contemplated in the contract.

Areas of Concern

- Recent operational performance and compliance concerns arising from the affiliate school in Arizona, for which PTAA assumed operations in July of 2021, raise significant capacity concerns and raise questions about the CMO's readiness to grow. The five-year interval review compliance report for this school, dated January 27, 2021, notes only one compliance concern. A second, similar [review](#) was conducted on September 29, 2021 after the affiliate of the proposed Nevada CMO assumed operational control of the school. As noted on pages 19-23, for each of the operational standards evaluated, the school was deemed to not meet operational standards. This resulted in authorizer intervention on January 10, 2022. Specifically, the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools found that the school had failed to meet the operational performance expectations set forth in the Board's operational performance framework and has violated its charter contract and state and federal law. The Board exercised its legal discretion and rather than issuing a notice of

¹⁹ The official name of the Charter Holder which operates the school is Phoenix Education Management, LLC.

intent to revoke the charter contract, and directed its staff to work with legal counsel to develop a consent agreement to address the school's noncompliance. While SPCSA staff has confirmed with the Arizona authorizer that the school is now in compliance in these areas, the number of compliance concerns occurring shortly after the CMO assumed operational control of the school raise significant capacity concerns about the CMO and its ability to support another school this upcoming fall. Additionally, these concerns raise questions about the success of prior attempts to scale to other states. While the proposed governing body of PTAA Nevada has indicated that they will require the CMO to provide quarterly updates regarding the performance of sister schools and evaluate the performance of the CMO relating to other schools in the PTAA Network, this is not codified within the management agreement, nor is it clear how the board would use this information to hold the proposed CMO accountable. Within the second (April) resubmission, the applicant refers to the letter from the proposed board chair dated January 25, 2022. This letter states that a number of the compliance issues in Arizona were related to the transition between the prior charter holder and PTAA Arizona. However, the Arizona Authorizer clearly shows that the compliance review conducted less than a year earlier under the prior school management as part of the Arizona Authorizer's five-year review process identified only one compliance issue, while the compliance review conducted after the school became part of the PTAA Network showed compliance issues in every category. A screenshot of this report can be found below. While the applicant indicates that these issues would not occur in Nevada, a cursory review of the operations of the PTAA Network within Nevada does not support claim. For example, SSS Partners which works with 100 Academy of Excellence in Clark County, and which the proposed Superintendent is also the President, is in default with the Nevada Secretary of State's office and is not currently licensed to do business in Nevada, despite its ongoing business in the State. Finally, the applicant has not provided an updated copy of the management agreement that codifies the regular updates regarding sister schools nor the evaluation of the performance of the CMO relating to other schools within the PTAA Network, nor has the applicant explained how the board would use this information to hold the proposed CMO accountable.

Operational Performance Dashboard - Short Form

Measure	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
1.a. Does the delivery of the education program and operation reflect the essential terms of the educational program as described in the charter contract?	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets	Does Not Meet
1.b. Does the charter holder adhere with applicable education requirements defined in state and federal law?	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets	Does Not Meet
2.a. Do the charter holder's annual audit reporting packages reflect sound operations?	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets	Does Not Meet
2.b. Is the charter holder administering student admission and attendance appropriately?	Meets	Meets	Does Not Meet	Meets	Does Not Meet
2.c. Is the charter holder maintaining a safe environment consistent with state and local requirements?	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets	Does Not Meet
2.d. Is the charter holder transparent in its operations?	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets	Does Not Meet
2.e. Is the charter holder complying with its obligations to the Board?	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets	Does Not Meet
2.f. Is the charter holder complying with reporting requirements of other entities to which the charter holder is accountable?	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets	--
3. Is the charter holder complying with all other obligations?	Meets	Meets	Meets	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet

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ASBCS, January 10, 2022

Phoenix Education Management, LLC



Measure	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
OVERALL RATING	Meets Operational Standard	Meets Operational Standard	Meets Operational Standard	Meets Operational Standard	Does Not Meet Operational Standard
BOARD EXPECTATIONS	Meets Operational Expectations	Meets Operational Expectations	Meets Operational Expectations	Meets Operational Expectations	Does Not Meet Operational Expectations

Last Updated: 2021-12-07 12:02:16

- It remains unclear how the CMO evaluated readiness for growth and whether the CMO is ready to support an additional school in Las Vegas. During the capacity interview, the CMO was asked about how it evaluated readiness to expand. The CMO indicated that expansion had been driven by invitations or demand from other states, but did not discuss how the CMO had determined that the organization was ready to support additional schools. Limited new information was provided in the first (December) resubmission to support this organization's readiness to expand, and as previously noted, SPCSA staff has significant concerns about the organizational performance of the CMO and its affiliates due to recent findings in Arizona. The second (April) resubmission also provides limited new information to address readiness for growth and it remains unclear what criteria were used to evaluate readiness for expansion.
- Questions remain about the CMO and their readiness to open and support a high performing school in Nevada. Currently, the proposed CMO is supporting 100 Academy, a public charter school authorized by CCSD. 100 Academy is partially meeting state standards according to the most recent

Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) for both the elementary and middle school and the latest available data for 100 Academy indicates that proficiency levels have not improved. While the relationship between the CMO and 100 Academy is relatively new and the impacts of COVID-19 have likely affected the implementation of the program and ability to collect reliable student assessment data, available data does not demonstrate that the CMO has been able to implement a program that has driven significant academic gains for students in Nevada. Data included in the second (April) resubmission shows that fewer students were scoring at or above the 50th percentile at the beginning of this school year than were scoring at or above the 50th percentile at the beginning of last school year. This data contradicts the applicant's assertion that the school has seen significant improvement. Ultimately, the additional information provided does not establish that the CMO has been able to implement a program that has driven significant academic gains for students in Nevada. Additionally, within the second (April) resubmission, the applicant states that 100 Academy recently earned the Nevada Governor's STEM Designation. While this may indicate some progress for the school, it is important to note that the school's designation is within the "Developing" category which is described as a program that provides STEM-related experiences for students in specific classes or instructional settings as part of the daily schedule²⁰. The Developing level is the lowest of three levels that earns a school the Nevada Governor's STEM Designation, signaling the presence of some attributes of a STEM school. However, it does not serve as evidence of academic growth and achievement to warrant a three-star or better rating.

- The second (April) resubmission fails to provide clear, appropriate delineation of roles and responsibilities between CMO and school-level staff, which represents a major concern for a school proposing to open in August 2022. Inconsistencies were identified between the written application and the capacity interview regarding the services to be provided by the proposed CMO. The draft contract provided in the written application indicates that the CMO will be significantly involved in the proposed school, but the narrative describes the CMO as primarily a "back office" provider. For example, proposed contract contemplates many day-to-day responsibilities such as the implementation of the educational program and services to special needs students. Additionally, the initial application indicates that the responsibility for dismissal of staff lies with the Superintendent of the CMO, raising questions about the principal's role in the dismissal of staff as they would work with school staff on a day-to-day basis. Another example of the lack of clarity is the role of the CMO in the hiring of teachers as several different, contradictory arrangements are contemplated. The original application indicates that the Superintendent of the CMO and principal will be responsible for final decisions regarding hiring, while other sections of the application state that the Regional Director of the CMO, with support of the principal is charged with recruiting and hiring staff. The second (April) resubmitted application did not resolve this concern. In one place, the narrative indicates that the principal is responsible for hiring staff, but then goes on to say that the CMO staff with principal support will recruit and hire all staff members. This issue is

²⁰ Additionally, the Developing level is characterized by the following statements: STEM content is regularly offered in addition to the regular curriculum and is only occasionally integrated, with limited independent student learning through inquiry. Some administrator support exists for STEM collaboration and professional learning opportunities. Teachers and students understand the importance of STEM to future careers. Students work to solve teacher-developed, real-world problems. Partnerships exist with STEM businesses and families but may be underdeveloped. (The Nevada STEM Framework 2021). See the following link for more information:

<https://osit.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/osit.nv.gov/Content/STEM/Nevada%20STEM%20Framework%202021.pdf>

compounded in other sections of the second (April) resubmission that include brief statements that the CMO will continue to work with the school as needed and points to minor changes to the previously submitted PTAA Nevada Decision Making Flow Chart which now lists the school staff as being hired by the principal. Notably, the second (April) resubmission contains conflicting information on this issue. While the Decision Making Flow Chart and portions of the narrative indicate that the principal hires the school staff, the narrative within the Human Resources section states that the “regional director with principal support are charged with recruiting and hiring all staff.” This same section states that the CMO head and principal will observe a sample lesson for teaching candidates, raising questions about the regional director’s role in hiring if he will not be observing the sample lesson. Additionally, while the incubation year plan states that all teachers are to be identified by July 1, 2022 and the organization plan states that hiring and interview process has already started, the principal is not expected to be hired until June 15, raising further questions about the principals role in the hiring process and the feasibility of the incubation year plan. As for other concerns about the clarity of the role of the CMO, no additional information is provided, and the second (April) resubmission did not include any changes to the draft contract. Additional information is needed to understand the roles and responsibilities of the CMO, especially for an application proposing to open in August 2022. The application narrative and all attachments and appendices, such as the proposed contract with the CMO and the draft board policy manual should articulate a consistent delineation of roles and responsibilities.

- Previous findings from a financial audit provided in the initial application raise questions about internal financial policies and procedures. In the second (April) resubmission, the applicant provided a report from the Charter Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas. This report overall shows solid financial performance for fiscal year 2020-21. However, the fact remains that the financial audit for Fiscal Year 2019-20 contained a finding related to the reporting of financial liabilities. No further information has been provided to demonstrate that this issue has been resolved.

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 Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy Nevada was conducted on Thursday, October 7, 2021 and lasted approximately 120-minutes. Various representatives of the proposed CMO were present at the interview, in addition to all members of the proposed board with one exception. Questions during the capacity interview focused primarily on these areas:

Targeted Plan	Leadership Team
Parent and Community Involvement	Student Recruitment and Enrollment
Curriculum & Instructional Design	Facilities
At-Risk Students and Special Populations	Financial Plan
Driving for Results	Scale Strategy
School Structure: Discipline	School Management Contracts
School Structure: Calendar and Schedule	CMO Applying for Sponsorship Directly
Board Governance	

Prior to the capacity interview, the review committee sent the applicant team a list of clarifying questions to provide an additional opportunity for details and information to be presented. These responses were considered by the review team, and were used to better inform the capacity interview.

Lastly, the capacity interview included a scenario-based question that probed the applicant team’s capacity to oversee and monitor the progress of the proposed school during the incubation year.

Meet and Confer

The Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy Nevada applicant team met with the SPCSA staff on multiple occasions to discuss the deficiencies identified prior to their first (December) resubmission on December 16, 2021. During these meetings, the applicant team asked a number of questions and sought clarity about identified deficiencies.

The Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy of Nevada applicant team met with the SPCSA staff on April 8, 2022 to discuss the deficiencies identified in the March 30, 2022 Notice of Deficiencies. During this meeting, the applicant team ask a number of questions and sought clarity about identified deficiencies.

District Input

Per Assembly Bill 462 (2019), now codified in NRS 388A.249, the SPCSA solicited input from the Clark County School District regarding this application.²¹ The timeline regarding this request for input is below and the response provided by the Clark County School District is attached.

- August 5, 2021 – Memo sent to CCSD soliciting input.
- November 1, 2021 – Written input provided from CCSD to SPCSA.
- November 24, 2021 – Written notification from the SPCSA to CCSD regarding the denial of the original Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy Nevada charter application.
- January 4, 2022 – Written notification to CCSD confirming that the Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy first (December) resubmission had been received. The SPCSA provided a tentative

²¹ NRS 388A.249(2)(a): “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.”

timeline for possible action on the Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy resubmitted application, and provided CCSD with an opportunity to provide additional input.

- March 14, 2022 - Written notification from the SPCSA to CCSD regarding the denial of the resubmitted Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy Nevada charter application.
- April 18, 2022 – Written notification to CCSD that pursuant to an order from the 8th District Court, the SPCSA would be considering a second (April) resubmission of the Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy Application on April 29, 2022.

Appendix (Rubric Detail)

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

Meeting the Need

- **Targeted Plan**
 - *Clear and compelling rationale for the selected community based on academic or demographic need.*
 - *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 application establishes that the local community has helped shape the final school proposal.*
 - *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 and Instructional Design**
 - *A clear explanation, supported by evidence, demonstrating how the school's academic program, including the curriculum, 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.*
- **Driving for Results**
 - *Internal and mission-specific goals are SMART: goals and objectives are specific, measurable, ambitious and attainable, relevant, and time bound.*
 - *The assessment plan is sufficiently detailed to demonstrate collection and analysis of individual student, student cohorts, school level, and network-level performance over time (interim, annual, year over year), including a clear process for setting and monitoring ambitious academic goals.*
 - *Sound plan for measuring and reporting academic performance and progress of students for both individual schools and the network (if applicable).*
- **At-Risk Students and Special Populations**
 - *The Committee to Form provides a logical method supported by research according to which they will assess the needs of at-risk students. The Committee to Form also outlines a continuum of programs, strategies, and supports that corresponds with the needs identified for each student and is supported by research.*
 - *The Committee to Form outlines the methods according to which the school will remediate academically underperforming students, including the system according to which the school will track progress, facilitate teacher collaboration, and the research supporting the school's*

remediation strategy.

Operations Plan

- **Board Governance**
 - *Proposed governance structure is likely to ensure effective governance and meaningful oversight of school performance, operations, and financials. The proposed governing body demonstrates capacity and expertise to successfully oversee a school.*
- **Leadership Team**
 - *The leadership accomplishments of the school leader or leadership team are demonstrable with empirical data related to student performance as well as the recruitment, hiring, and development of a highly effective staff.*
 - *If the school leader is not yet identified, the committee to form explains the method by which they will recruit and select a candidate who satisfies the criteria listed in the job description.*
 - *Provides a comprehensive plan for coaching, support and evaluation of school leadership.*
- **Staffing Plan**
 - *Staffing plans matches the proposed budget and is explicitly aligned to both budget narrative assumptions and to budget calculations.*
 - *Sound understanding of staffing needs necessary for the new school(s) proposed.*
- **Human Resources**
 - *Articulates process for recruiting and hiring high quality teachers and leaders.*
 - *Articulates a recruitment and hiring plan that will result in a school staff reflective of the student body.*
 - *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.*
- **Student Recruitment and Enrollment**
 - *The enrollment plan reflects an understanding of the Nevada context.*
 - *Complies with Nevada laws and regulations regarding enrollment, including but not limited to:*
 - *Minimum 45-day notification period followed by 45-day enrollment period OR a combined 90-day notification and enrollment period.²²*
- **Incubation Year Development**
 - *Provides key milestones for the planning year, as well as concrete actions and accountability, that will ensure that the school is ready for a successful launch. These plans should identify the individuals responsible for leading Year 0 initiatives. If a third party (EMO/CMO) is going to implement portions of the Year 0 plan, the committee to form has provided documentation that articulates related terms and services.*
 - *Outlines comprehensive leadership development plans that include training aligned with incubation year goals as well as stated academic goals (these may be either designed by or outsourced by the operator).*
 - *The staffing outlined for Year 0 will enable the school to reach its Year 0 milestones and*

²²Alongside the second (April) resubmission, the applicant submitted two requests for good cause exemptions to 1) revise the timeline for required notification to households within a 2-mile radius of the school set forth in NRS 388A.450, effectively eliminating the typical 45-day notification period and providing this concurrently with the open enrollment period, and 2) shorten the 45-day open enrollment period before which a lottery may be conducted for admission to the school to 30 days as set forth in NRS 388A.453.

goals

- **Services**
 - *Operations plan includes logical plans for all essential and program-specific non-academic services, including but not limited to:*
 - *Staff structure/plan is adequate for the proposed school and aligns with the educational program; lines of authority are clear.*
- **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.*

Addendum

- **Readiness for Growth**
 - *Criteria for evaluating readiness for expansion are comprehensive and demonstrate high expectations for academic, financial, and organizational performance.*
 - *Academic Performance data for schools affiliated with the CMO/EMO demonstrate strong performance equivalent to 4- or 5-star performance on the NSPF.*
 - *Organizational Performance data for schools affiliated with the CMO/EMO demonstrate strong performance equivalent to a rating of 'meets standard' on the SPCSA's Organizational Performance Framework.*
 - *The three most recent audits of the EMO/CMO and existing schools show no material findings.*
- **Scale Strategy**
 - *The plan to scale the model to new sites is adequately resourced and staffed appropriately.*
 - *Previous scale-up endeavors are shown to have been successful with student performance data, organizational and financial data (if applicable).*
 - *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.*
 - *Organization charts clearly indicate lines of authority between the board, network, and schools.*
- **School Management Contracts**
 - *Clear, appropriate delineation of roles and responsibilities between the management organization and the school site(s).*
 - *Demonstrates capacity and commitment of the governing board to oversee the EMO/CMO effectively.*
 - *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 the period of time.*