

Charter School Application Report

# CIVICA Nevada Career & Collegiate Academy

*Recommendation from the Winter 2020 Charter Application Cycle*

## General Information

<b>Proposed Name</b>	CIVICA Nevada Career & Collegiate Academy
<b>Proposed Mission</b>	To provide a high-quality, rigorous, and career-oriented education that will prepare students for successful progression into college and career pathways.
<b>Proposed EMO</b>	Academica Nevada
<b>Proposed Grade Configuration</b>	Opening: Kindergarten – 7 <sup>th</sup> grade Full-Scale: Kindergarten – 12 <sup>th</sup> grade
<b>Proposed Opening</b>	August 2021
<b>Proposed Location</b>	Adjacent to the Maya Cinemas at 2195 Las Vegas Blvd. N. North Las Vegas, NV 89030  School anticipates primarily serving 89030, 89032, 89101, 89106, 89110 and 89115 zip codes

## Process/Key Dates for CIVICA Nevada

- New Charter Application Training
- September 4, 2019 – Notice of Intent is received
- January 15, 2020 – Application is received
- March 30, 2020 - Capacity Interview is conducted
- May 29, 2020 – Recommendation is presented

## Planned Enrollment Chart

	<u>2021-22</u>	<u>2022-23</u>	<u>2023-24</u>	<u>2024-25</u>	<u>2025-26</u>	<u>2026-27</u>
<u>K</u>	100	125	125	125	125	125
<u>1</u>	100	100	125	125	125	125
<u>2</u>	75	100	100	125	125	125
<u>3</u>	75	100	100	125	125	125
<u>4</u>	50	75	100	100	125	125
<u>5</u>	50	50	100	100	100	125
<u>6</u>	60	120	120	150	150	150
<u>7</u>	60	60	120	120	150	150
<u>8</u>		60	60	120	150	150
<u>9</u>			60	120	120	150
<u>10</u>				60	120	120
<u>11</u>					60	120
						60
<u>Total</u>	570	790	1,010	1,270	1,475	1,650

## Executive Summary and Recommendation

The review committee, which included two members of the SPCSA staff and three external reviewers, was unable to arrive at a unanimous recommendation for the CIVICA application. This split decision was the result of outstanding questions in a few areas, namely within the academic and operations plans. These are briefly outlined below and in subsequent pages.

The review committee and SPCSA staff unanimously find that the CIVICA Nevada charter school application meets the Geographic component of the SPCSA Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment. The applicant has proposed a school model that includes demonstrated capacity, credible plans, and community engagement in order to intentionally meet the needs historically underserved student groups. In addition, the applicant has demonstrated a commitment, through community engagement and partnerships, to create a 4 or 5-star school in a community that has multiple 1 and 2-star schools and to provide access to students currently enrolled in those 1 and 2-star schools.

Both the review committee and SPCSA staff find that the proposed academic plan, when considering the additional information provided during the capacity interview, meets the standard as outlined in the charter application. Although this was not a unanimous finding within the review team, a majority of the review committee determined that the proposed replication of the successful COHEA model could be effective in helping students in the North Las Vegas become college and career ready in fields that are responsive to community needs. It was further determined that the application also provided robust performance goals, and the

Committee to Form demonstrated capacity to oversee and implement the proposed program effectively.

The review committee and SPCSA staff unanimously find that the financial plans meets the standard as outlined in the charter application rubric. The submitted budget is conservative, and represents a viable plan for the school. Additionally, the Committee to Form and proposed Board possesses financial expertise, and the review committee finds them to be capable of overseeing the school's budget while also holding vendors accountable.

The operations plan within the CIVICA Nevada application included a number of strengths that were determined to meet the standard within the rubric. The Committee to form has a strong facility plan, and was also able to demonstrate demand for the proposed school within the community it intends to serve. Concerns related to the demonstrated capacity of the principal, staffing plan, and incubation year plan prevented this section from being rated any higher than 'Approaches the Standard'.

Notwithstanding the finding that the operations section did not meet the standard, a majority of the review committee, in addition to staff, recommend that the Authority conditionally approve the CIVICA Nevada charter application. The proposed motion and conditions are outlined below.

***Proposed motion:*** Approve the CIVICA Nevada application as submitted during the 2020 Winter Application Cycle, with the conditions outlined below, based on a finding that the applicant meets the requirements contained in NRS 388A.249(3).

1. Provide an updated list of proposed partnerships which also includes draft Memorandums of Understanding with each identified partner, and outlines deliverables and responsibilities of each party.
2. Submit a revised SEL and ELL student support plan that reflects an adjusted staffing model to adequately address the projected student population.
3. Submit a draft evaluation tool(s) to be utilized by the Board to annually evaluate both Academics Nevada and the CIVICA Foundation. One or both of these tools should specifically address CTE program coordination.
4. Provide a draft of the CTE scope and sequence (by grade level), name the exact certification exams to be administered and by whom, and include draft MOUs by the local colleges (or at least letters of commitment) for the career exploration pathways.
5. Submit a 12-month, detailed Incubation year plan that includes a professional development plan tailored to the proposed Principal.

SPCSA Staff recommends that the Authority delegate the review and approval of these conditions to staff, with the understanding that the school will provide updates to the Authority periodically through the incubation year.

## Summary of Application Section Ratings

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

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

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

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

[http://charterschools.nv.gov/OpenASchool/Application\\_Packet/](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.

<u>Application Section</u>	<u>Initial Rating</u>
<b>Meeting the Need</b>	<b>Meets the Standard</b>
Targeted Plan	Meets the Standard
Parent and Community Involvement	Meets the Standard
<b>Academic Plan<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Meets the Standard</b>
Mission and Vision	Meets the Standard
Transformational Change	Approaches the Standard
Curriculum & Instructional Design	Approaches the Standard
High School Graduation Requirements	Meets the Standard
Driving for Results	Approaches the Standard
At-Risk Students and Special Populations	Approaches the Standard
School Structure (Culture)	Meets the Standard
School Structure (Student Discipline)	Meets the Standard
School Structure (Calendar and Schedule)	Meets the Standard
<b>Operations Plan<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Approaches the Standard</b>
Leadership Team	Approaches the Standard
Staffing	Approaches the Standard
Human Resources	Approaches the Standard
Scale Strategy	Approaches the Standard
Student Recruitment and Enrollment	Meets the Standard
Board Governance	Meets the Standard
Incubation Year Development	Approaches the Standard
School Management Contracts	Approaches the Standard
Services	Meets the Standard
Facilities	Meets the Standard
Ongoing Operations	Meets the Standard
<b>Financial Plan</b>	<b>Meets the Standard</b>

<sup>1</sup> The CIVICA proposal did not contemplate distance education or Pre-Kindergarten. Therefore, the corresponding sections of the rubric were not scored.

<sup>2</sup> The CIVICA review team determined that the Leadership for Expansion section was not applicable to this application.

## Meeting the Need Section

The applicant intends to locate the school in the 89030 zip code and plans to serve students primarily residing in the following zip codes: 89030, 89032, 89101, 89106, 89110, 89115. Each of these zip codes includes at least eight schools that are rated as 1 or 2-star schools according to the Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) and appear in the SPCSA Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment. The proposed model is innovative and attempts to provide students with a rigorous academic program in order to make them college and career ready upon graduation. CIVICA Nevada expects to serve a student population that is racially and ethnically diverse and representative of the surrounding community as it projects that approximately 12% of its student population will have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), 95% will qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), and 34% will be English Language Learners (ELL). The Committee to Form demonstrated a strong understanding of this community both within the written application as well as during the capacity interview, and was also able to provide tangible evidence of community outreach. Additionally, it was apparent that the community was engaged throughout the application development although some community partnerships need to be solidified.

### Areas of Strength

- The application provides compelling data regarding the need for high quality schools in the proposed community based on the current academic performance of the schools. In the capacity interview, the Committee to Form was able to articulate the intention to enroll an anticipated student population which includes significant percentages of students in subgroups who have been historically disadvantaged.
- During the capacity interview, it became even clearer that the school had a targeted plan to serve the needs of the North Las Vegas community. The Committee to Form appeared to understand the community where they intend to open, and was able to provide tangible evidence of community outreach, citing door-to-door canvassing and multiple types of events to raise awareness about the school. Evidence was also available within the written application.
- The Committee to Form was able to provide evidence that the school is responsive to the needs of community. Specifically, this was accomplished through the Nevada Governor's Office of Workforce Innovation (OWINN) report, specific examples of community feedback, as well as through identified community partners.
- The application includes performance data for COHEA Charter School, which is the secondary program that the Committee to Form seeks to replicate. Performance data was provided for both COHEA and Mater Academy, which is to be the model for the proposed elementary program; the data are strong and suggest the school will expose students to a program that addresses preparedness for both college and career.
- Multiple members of the Committee to Form as well as the proposed Principal have extensive experience living and/or working in the proposed community in which the school intends to locate.

## Areas of Concern

- While the Committee to Form was able to clearly demonstrate a high level of engagement with the local community, identified partnerships and corresponding letters of support do not contain specifics or deliverables. During the capacity interview, a proposed board member stated that these commitments could not be formally secured unless a charter was awarded, but draft MOUs or letters of support that outline specific expectations or deliverables represent a missed opportunity by the applicant team. This is especially true given that the career academy pathways rely heavily upon future partnerships.

## Academic Section

The academic section of the application calls for an innovative model, replicated from the successful COHEA public charter school in Hialeah, FL. Successful completion of the program will prepare students to take industry certification exams so as to be ready to enter the workforce upon graduation. The progression of career pathway exploration at the middle school level provides students with appropriate content exposure prior to the proposed high school programs, which were developed based upon community engagement and research. While the review team has some concerns regarding the immediate capacity of the school leader, the Committee to Form demonstrated a strong understanding of the proposed academic model and has experience in founding and leading new schools.

### Areas of Strength

- During the capacity interview, the Committee to Form demonstrated a clear understanding of the proposed program and was able to detail how it was both relevant and critical to the community. There is clear capacity to implement and oversee the CIVICA model.
- The proposed career pathways and academies structure aligns with the mission and vision of the school, are fairly developed in terms of sequencing and proposed courses, and align with specific needs and desired programming within the community. Additionally, the focus on STEM education has an increased likelihood to lead students to success beyond high school graduation.
- The proposed curricula are aligned to Nevada Academic Content Standards (NVACS) and expose students to rigorous content while also developing reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- The instructional delivery model became clearer during the capacity interview, and the Committee to Form spoke to key instructional strategies and the importance of data to course correct instruction for individuals or groups of students.
- The presented plan for professional development complements the school's emphasis on data by accentuating strategies for reviewing and using data, and will also include differentiated instruction.
- The capacity interview provided greater clarity on the proposed school culture and how it will support students' social and emotional learning. For example, middle school grades will participate in the "Value Matters Program" that focuses on strengthening pre-adolescents' social and emotional skills. This discussion reaffirmed that the school has a firm understanding of the culture it seeks to establish.
- Intervention strategies detailed within the submitted application were clear, and Members of the Committee to Form understand that these will be critical for students given that many may need additional supports. The proposed Response to Intervention (RtI) model describes how students will be identified and moved between tiers depending on academic progress. During the capacity interview, it was made clear that these strategies would occur both during and outside of the school day, providing more likelihood that all students needing supports will be adequately served.

- Performance goals and metrics are established and are based on the performance of traditional public schools in the area. The proposal includes a robust battery of assessments, and puts forth baselines and targets for interim and end-of-year assessments that are centered on student growth and proficiency for subgroups. As such, they are aligned to the NSPF and would likely provide important and timely signals to the leadership team and proposed Board.
- The proposed daily schedule and calendar is detailed, meets the requisite number of school days, and aligns with the proposed programming to be offered at the school. The proposal also incorporates an Attendance Review Committee which will function as a mechanism to monitor student attendance and the school's overall goal of 95% average daily attendance.

### Areas of Concern

- It remains unclear if the proposed staffing plan has sufficient capacity to support the student population the school intends to serve. Specifically, the school plans to open with a single ELL Coordinator on staff, and this position is not scaled as the student population grows. Additionally, while the application details a clear plan for school culture, students' social-emotional needs are not adequately addressed within the application. The Committee to Form identified ELL and special education teachers as those primarily responsible for fulfilling SEL and human services needs. In light of the anticipated student population, this raises capacity questions. The proposal does not contemplate a Counselor in year 1 and the staffing plan does not appear to adequately support these students. The potential burden on ELL and special education teachers beyond their typical role and responsibilities is concerning.
- During the capacity interview, the proposed principal offered few specifics and details about the proposed program and its implementation. While the current Committee to Form demonstrated strong capacity and understanding of the model, this raised questions about the current leadership capacity and underscored the need for a detailed incubation year plan tailored to developing the proposed principal.

## Organizational Section

The proposed governing board brings a wealth of experience and expertise in a variety of areas, and distinctly understands the role of oversight, governance and accountability. The initial application raised concerns about the proposed organizational structure and relationships between the board and vendors, but both the capacity interview and additional requested information provided increased clarity. While the proposed facility plan is well developed, the review committee has lingering questions about specific elements of the proposed staffing plan as well as the vague incubation year plan.

During the scenario-based question exercise at the capacity interview, it was quickly evident that the Committee to Form is able to identify key decision points and formulate plans to address any deficiencies or performance issues that could arise in the life of a public charter school.

### Areas of Strength

- The Committee to Form includes experienced Principals and demonstrated a strong grasp of the mission and vision of the school and the community the school plans to serve. Collectively, the Committee to Form was also able to provide concrete examples of relationships that have been cultivated with local partners.
- The community engagement experience of the proposed principal complements the proposed model.
- The Committee to Form and members of the proposed Board understand their role of governance, and were able to provide extensive details during the capacity interview about the proposed organizational structure of school as it relates to Academica Nevada and the CIVICA Foundation. The proposed Board understands what oversight entails and was able to articulate the primary focus was student achievement and that all vendors would be evaluated.
- A prospective site for the facility has been identified, has adequate zoning, and there is sufficient time to construct the building should the school be approved. The applicant was also able to provide specific details regarding the proposed facility including specific classroom numbers and evidence that there has been ongoing communication with local jurisdictions.
- The application provided significant evidence of demand for the proposed school in the form of Intent to Enroll Forms. It is clear that significant outreach has already occurred, specifically in the targeted zip codes.

### Areas of Concern

- The proposed staffing model does not adequately support the needs of EL students, nor does it appear to provide adequate capacity to support social-emotional needs of all students. That the school projects to serve a high number of FRL students, and that the current staffing plan does not include a Counselor in year 1 enhance these concerns. Additional questions remain about the implementation of the staffing model for interventions that may occur outside of the traditional school day.

- The presented Incubation year plan raises questions about the roles and responsibilities of both Academica Nevada as well as the CIVICA Foundation. While draft agreements are included, they lack detail in some areas. Additionally, it is noteworthy that the current plan does not have any full-time staff during the proposed incubation year.
- While the school has identified potential partners to be involved in the academic life of the school, secure commitments that provide details and deliverables are outstanding. It is also unclear what role, if any, the CIVICA Foundation will play in securing future partnerships as information from the capacity interview differed from the written application.

## Financial Section

The application presented a conservative budget, and accounted for key expenditures included within the narrative. Additionally, the proposed Board demonstrated capacity for reading and understanding budgets, which are complemented by the financial expertise of the proposed EMO. Draft MOUs are provided for vendors tasked with critical duties, and the costs of these contractual relationships seem reasonable.

### Areas of Strength

- The Committee to Form possesses experience managing budgets at the school level, in government as well as in the private sector. This was reinforced during the capacity interview.
- The Intent to Enroll forms provided within the application support the school's budgeting assumption of 98.5% of the enrollment cap.
- Essential operational functions are accounted for in the budget, including the National School Lunch Program, facility maintenance, security and purchasing.
- The budget accounts for the services to be provided by Mater Academy of Nevada and the CIVICA Foundation, both of which are essential entities in the execution of the proposed academic plan.

### Areas of Concern

- The budget lacks significant funding streams that the school would likely receive if it serves the student demographic it projects. Specifically, the budget does not include Title I, Title II or IDEA funding.

## Capacity Interview Summary

Based on the independent and collective review of the application, the review committee conducted a virtual capacity interview<sup>3</sup> of the applicant to assess the capacity to execute the application's overall plan. The capacity interview for CIVICA Nevada was conducted on Monday, March 30, and lasted approximately 120-minutes. All but one of the proposed members of the Committee to Form attended on behalf of the applicant. Additionally, two representatives from Academica Nevada, the proposed Education Management Organization (EMO), attended the capacity interview. Questions during the capacity interview focused primarily on five key areas:

- The ability of the applicant to meet one or more of the academic or demographic needs as outlined in the SPCSA Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment.
- The academic plan, including curriculum and career preparation, instructional strategies, programs, special populations and student supports.
- The governance structure, roles and responsibilities.
- The operations plan including staffing, proposed leadership, vendors and service providers.
- The financial plan, including the proposed budget, prospective facilities, cash flow, and alignment to the proposed academic model.

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

## District Input

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

- February 14, 2020 – Memo sent to CCSD soliciting input.
- April 13, 2020 – Written input provided from CCSD to SPCSA.

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<sup>3</sup> The CIVICA Nevada Capacity Interview was conducted virtually as a result of the Governor's Emergency Directive 007 which was issued on March 24, 2020 and limited the size of public gatherings.

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

## Appendix (Rubric Detail)

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

### Academic Plan

- **Transformational Change**
  - *Educational model designed to drive significant academic improvement for all students, in line with SPCSA's goal of double-digit gains annually across all subgroups*
  - *Clear and specific description of methodology for faithfully implementing the program in a manner likely to result in replication of previous success in other schools*
  - *Articulation of clear and specific strategies and activities that explicitly identify the responsible parties, target population, actions, timelines, context, delivery methods, and rationale (who/what/where/when/how/why)*
- **Curriculum and Instructional Design**
  - *Instructional programs offer a continuum of services to students through a tiered system of interventions, ensuring that all students are able to build the knowledge base necessary to access rigorous instruction*
  - *Instructional programs identify and consider personal/social and other life skills for personalized planning, instructional delivery, and support services for all students, as well as utilization of student's Individualized Learning Plans*
  - *Remediation for students in need of additional support*
- **Driving for Results**
  - *There is a clear process for setting, monitoring and/or revising internal leading indicator academic goals*
  - *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*
  - *Demonstrates the validity and reliability of any internal non-standardized assessments, as well as how these assessments are aligned with the school design and high expectations*
- **At-Risk Students and Special Populations**
  - *ELL staffing aligns with qualifications required in statute*
  - *Describes the specific services that will be provided for students within and outside the classroom, including curriculum and instruction and exposure to co-teaching*
  - *Devotes adequate resources and staff to meeting the needs of all students*

### Operations Plan

- **Leadership Team**
  - *Structure demonstrates effective assignment of management roles and distribution of responsibilities for instructional leadership, curriculum, personnel, budgeting, financial management, management of state categorical revenue streams, special education and ELL programming, legal compliance, state reporting, external relations, and any unique, school-specific staffing needs*

- *Demonstrates that leaders meet necessary qualifications and competencies*
- *Provides adequate coaching and support for school leadership*
- **Staffing**
  - *Appropriately staffed to serve the intended student population*
  - *Sound understanding of staffing needs necessary for the new-school(s) proposed*
- **Human Resources**
  - *School staffing structure that ensures high-quality teacher support/development, student/family support, effective school operations, and compliance with all applicable policies and procedures*
- **Scale Strategy**
  - *Adequately developed and staffed appropriately*
  - *Organization has sufficient infrastructure (or plan to develop same) to support the proposed network of schools, including shared services and the costs associated with them*
  - *Clear, appropriate delineation of roles and responsibilities between the management organization and the school sites*
- **Incubation Year Development**
  - *Provides key planning year milestones for the planning year, as well as concrete actions and accountability, to ensure that the school is ready for a successful launch*
  - *Describes leader development that includes training aligned with incubation year goals (may be either designed by or outsourced by the operator)*
- **School Management Contracts**
  - *Plan for board to monitor/evaluate the EMO's performance*
  - *Appropriate internal controls guide the relationship*
  - *Clearly defined contract terms.*