



STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

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

2080 East Flamingo Road Suite 230
Las Vegas, Nevada 89119-5164
(702) 486-8895 • Fax (702) 486-5543

ACTION MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Board
FROM: Mike Dang, Manager, Financial and Organizational Performance
Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing
SUBJECT: **Beacon Academy of Nevada**
1) Implement Dual-Credit Program
2) Occupy an additional site
DATE: June 26, 2020

Summary of Request and SPCSA Staff Recommendation

On February 18, 2020, the Governing Board of Beacon Academy of Nevada (Beacon) approved its leadership submitting a Request For Amendment to the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) for Beacon to:

1. Be granted a Good Cause Exemption to accept this RFA
2. Implement a Dual-Credit Program
3. Open a second campus beginning in the 2021- 2022 school year.

SPCSA staff has reviewed the application and recommends approval of both requests, subject to the conditions described below.

Background

Beacon Academy of Nevada (BANV) is an alternative high school that serves a large percentage of students who have previously dropped out of school, have a history of poor attendance, and are credit deficient. The amendment application states that the majority of the students who enroll and remain enrolled live in close proximity to the school. A long commute using public transportation is a barrier that frequently prevents students from attending school on a consistent basis. Although Beacon Academy receives registration forms from students throughout Clark County, it mainly serves students from the west side. According to the application, enrollment is limited to students who qualify for alternative education as defined by NRS 385A.740. The blended school model requires students to physically attend school a minimum of two days per week or more frequently for more intense academic interventions and wraparound support.

The amendment proposal goes on to state that stakeholders hold the BANV academic program in high regard but are disappointed when learning the school only operates one campus on the west side. Interest in a second location on the east side has increased as more students, parents, school personnel, and community organizations learn about BANV's unique programs specifically designed to meet the needs of at-risk students. Other reasons for opening a second campus include:

- Providing school choice to underserved alternative education high school students with limited options residing in East Las Vegas.
- Decreasing the commute time for students who reside on the east side of the Las Vegas Valley.
- Increasing student engagement in school by removing barriers i.e. transportation, seat-time, family responsibilities, etc.
- Increasing flexibility to allow students to attend school while working, raising families etc.
- Providing equity and equal access to BANV that is currently only offered to residents in West Las Vegas.

Dual Enrollment Amendment:

Also according to the application, in accordance with “NRS 389.310 and 389.160, BANV would like to offer 11th and 12th grade qualifying students the opportunity to earn college credit at Great Basin College (GBC) while earning credit towards high school graduation. Attending college while in high school exposes students to college culture, and improves high school and college attendance and retention. GBC has many online courses and now offers a Certificate of General Studies for high school students to earn 30 college credits and 15 high school credits.

According to the application, although BANV students may have faced adversity and difficulty to achieve academic success in the past, there are currently enrolled students that would qualify to enroll in the dual enrollment program and be successful if they are provided with the opportunity.

Expansion Amendment:

The second aspect of the submitted amendment details the expansion request for BANV. Specifically, the school is requesting approval to open a second site in East Las Vegas to better serve the needs of the Las Vegas community. The application goes on to detail that currently, 60% of the BANV student population lives in Spring Valley and the immediate surrounding areas. The proposed location, to be within the 89101, 89104 or 89110 zip code, increase the opportunity for alternative education students residing in east-central Las Vegas who either currently commute for several hours to attend BANV or who are currently underserved due to transportation limitations. While only 35 students from the target zip codes currently attend BANV, more than 30% of current students live closer to our proposed target location and would benefit from having a campus closer to their homes.

BANV goes on to state in the amendment application that the proposed school-site will make it easier for alternative education students from the following high schools to attend BANV: Valley High School, Chaparral High School, Del Sol High School, Rancho High School, Desert Pines High School, Eldorado High School, Las Vegas High School, and Rancho High School. The zip codes for these schools are 89101, 89104, 89110, 89119, 89120, 89121, 89142, 89156, and 89169.

Beacon adds that Building Hope has been a key supporter of this expansion effort due to risks and costs associated with this growth plan, specifically the difficulty in securing facilities, project manage construction, and procure financing while operating the existing school. To mitigate risk, the Governing Board selected Building Hope, a non-profit charter school development company, to manage the development process including site identification, financing, design and construction management etc. By working with Building Hope, BANV will avoid costly mistakes and receive the best financing possible. In addition, hiring a charter school developer will allow the school leaders to continue to operate the current school and plan for the new school to maintain its high-quality program.

The submitted amendment application also notes that Opportunity 180 has agreed to support the replication of Beacon Academy in a strategic advisory capacity. Upon any approval of this amendment, Beacon Academy plans to apply directly to Opportunity 180 for launch funds to support the implementation of its plan.

BANV is planning for the projected enrollment for the existing campus will remain at 385-400 students, which is under the current enrollment cap of 419. According to the amendment application, the projected enrollment for the proposed new campus is 200 students for the 2021-2022 school year and will gradually increase to 350-385 students by 2024 -2025 school year.

Applicant Eligibility

When reviewing a RFA, SPCSA reviews the academic, financial and organizational performance of the applicant charter school. Note that NAC 388A.400(8) states that when determining whether to grant or deny an amendment request that the Executive Director and the Authority are to consider the school's **academic**, financial and organizational performance. Beacon performs under the Alternative Performance Framework ([NRS 385A.740](#)) as approved by the Nevada State Board of Education in the summer of 2018.

Additionally, BANV has an additional, school-specific framework, that is embedded within their current contract. This academic performance framework designed to track the performance outcomes expected of a high-quality school serving a population that is exclusively made up of students eligible for alternative education. The framework includes measures such as achievement status, growth, college and career readiness measures, and student engagement. It is important to note that these results are verified by a third-party, Momentum Strategy and Research, which also provides additional insights related to the performance of the school. Results under this framework for the 2016 – 2017 and 2017 – 2018 school year can be found included within the supporting documentation for this agenda item. Generally, the school has demonstrated improvement since 2016, with increases in the following categories for alternative education students: growth, status (proficiency) and college and career readiness. The overall score and designation reflects this improvement, and the school's results under this framework can be found alongside this memo.

The total score within this framework in 2017 was 47 points, earning an 'Approaches standard' designation whereas the 2018 score was 66.5 points, earning an 'Adequate' designation. Results for the 2018 – 2019 school year showed a slight decrease in performance, but the school maintained an 'Adequate' designation.

This framework was originally approved by the Authority as part of the mutually agreed-upon settlement in 2016 which expires at the end of the 2019 – 2020 school year. Under the settlement, Beacon agreed to limit its service area to Clark County and establish an enrollment policy to enable participation in the Nevada Department of Education's Alternative Performance Framework (APF) as noted above. Beacon Academy of Nevada is the first charter high school in Nevada to transition to operate under the state's APF.

While this agreement expires at the end of June, the school was renewed for a new, six-year term beginning July 1, 2020. The Authority approved this renewal on November 1, 2019.

Beacon Academy of Nevada also receives results under the NSPF, and those reports for the 2018 – 2019 school year can be found included within the supporting documentation for this agenda item. In short, Beacon is currently measured under three frameworks: a school-specific framework, the state's Alternative School Performance Framework, and the Nevada School Performance Framework.

In this regard, and like many of Nevada's charter school statutes and regulations, Nevada's charter school statutes and regulations contain both mandatory and permissive provisions related to applications for charter school contract amendment requests. In regard to "permissive" denial of a charter school amendment application, NAC 388A.310(6)(b) states that a charter school sponsor "**may**" deny a request to amend a school's

charter contract of the school “was not rated in the first, second, or third highest tier during the last ratings of the charter school pursuant to the statewide system of accountability.” This reference, of course, is to the Nevada Department of Education’s Nevada School Performance Framework (“NSPF”) contemplated by NRS Chapter 385A, and means that a charter school sponsor “may” deny an amendment request if a charter school is not rated as a three-star school or better school under the NSPF. Because the school has been approved for the state’s Alternative School Performance Framework, and has demonstrated progress against its own, school-specific framework, SPCSA staff finds the school to be in good standing with regard to academics.

Additionally, SPCSA finds that the school is meeting performance requirements under both the financial and organizational frameworks.

Summary and Recommendation

Overall, SPCSA staff finds Beacon to be eligible to apply for these requests and its application to be compelling. SPCSA staff also finds that the proposed model of the expansion campus as well as the identified zip codes, as provided by the applicant, align with the priorities and goals of both the SPCSA Strategic Plan as well as the Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment.

As such, staff recommends that the SPCSA board approve Beacon’s requests subject to the following conditions:

Proposed Motion:

Approve the request of the Beacon Academy of Nevada (Beacon) to:

- 1. Grant the request for a Good Cause Exemption request,**
- 2. Implement a dual-credit program, with the condition that the school provide evidence that the governing body of BANV has applied and been approved by the State Board, thereby permitted students to earn credits during the upcoming school year.**
- 3. Open a second, expansion campus that will replicate the current BANV model in accordance with the plan outlined in the amendment application, with the following conditions:**
 - a. Provide staff with evidence or documentation that the school has secured a facility within the proposed zip codes as outlined above (89101, 89104 or 89110), and**
 - b. Complete the SPCSA new campus/charter pre-opening protocol in preparation for opening for the 2021 – 2022 school year.**

If approved, the following enrollment caps will be in place for the upcoming six-year term:

| | 2020-2021 | 2021-2022 | 2022-2023 | 2023-2024 | 2024-2025 | 2025-2026 |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| West Campus | | | | | | |
| Grade Levels | 9-12 | 9-12 | 9-12 | 9-12 | 9-12 | 9-12 |
| Enrollment | 419 | 419 | 419 | 419 | 419 | 419 |
| East Campus | | | | | | |
| Grade Levels | 9-12 | 9-12 | 9-12 | 9-12 | 9-12 | 9-12 |
| Enrollment | Not Open | 200 | 265 | 315 | 350 | 350 |

School Demographics since 2015

| Year | Total Enrollment ¹ | A | B | C | H | I | M | P | IEP | ELL | FRL |
|-------|-------------------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 15-16 | 548 | 2.1% | 11.3% | 44.3% | 33.2% | 0.7% | 6.0% | 2.1% | 12.0% | 1.6% | 46.8% |
| 16-17 | 402 | 3.7% | 12.4% | 43.2% | 31.0% | 0.7% | 5.7% | 2.9% | 15.4% | 3.7% | 50.4% |
| 17-18 | 384 | 2.0% | 17.9% | 33.5% | 37.5% | 1.0% | 4.6% | 3.1% | 18.2% | 9.8% | 57.2% |
| 18-19 | 405 | 3.7% | 15.3% | 28.1% | 43.5% | 1.0% | 5.7% | 2.7% | 19.8% | 13.1% | 65.7% |
| 19-20 | 380 | 3.9% | 13.9% | 24.5% | 47.9% | 1.3% | 6.6% | 1.8% | 25.0% | 13.4% | 66.1% |

Note: all enrollment numbers are from Validation Day each year.

- A – Asian
- B – Black
- C – Caucasian
- H – Hispanic
- I – American Indian/Alaskan Native
- M – Mixed/Two or more races
- P – Pacific Islander
- IEP – Individualized Education Plan –A student with a disability/special education student
- ELL – English Language Learner
- FRL – A student who qualifies for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

Academic Performance

| Metric | Beacon Academy of Nevada – Framework Results ¹ | | |
|---|---|------------------------|------------------------|
| | <u>2016 – 2017</u> | <u>2017 – 2018</u> | <u>2018 - 2019</u> |
| <u>Growth</u> | | | |
| - Reading | Unsatisfactory | Exceeds | Adequate |
| - Math | Adequate | Approaches | Adequate |
| <u>Status</u> | | | |
| - Reading | Critical | Adequate | Adequate |
| - Math | Critical | Adequate | Unsatisfactory |
| <u>College and Career Readiness</u> | | | |
| - Credit Attainment | Approaches | Adequate | Adequate |
| - Transition Success | Exceptional | Exceeds | Exceeds |
| - CCR Assessment Participation | Exceeds | Exceeds | Exceeds |
| <u>Student Engagement</u> | | | |
| - Attendance Rate | Exceeds | Approaches | Exceeds |
| - Retention Rate | Exceptional | Exceeds | Exceeds |
| Final Designation (Total Points) | Approaches (47) | Adequate (66.5) | Adequate (64.5) |

¹ The Beacon-specific performance framework has a six point rating scale that progresses as follows, from lowest to highest rating: critical, unsatisfactory, approaches, adequate, exceeds, exceptional.