

Charter School Application Report

pilotED – Cactus Park Elementary

Recommendation for the Summer 2021 Charter Application Cycle

General Information

Proposed Name	Cactus Park Elementary
Proposed EMO/CMO	CMO: pilotED Foundation
Proposed Mission	The mission and key components of Cactus Park Elementary is to empower elementary students in the ways in which they see themselves and the world around them through the use of a school model that embodies 1) social identity development, 2) a robust civic engagement system, and 3) a rigorous culturally relevant academic curriculum.
Proposed Grade Configuration	Opening: Kindergarten – 4 th Grade Full Scale: Kindergarten – 5 th Grade
Proposed Opening	August 2022
Proposed Location	3115 Las Vegas Blvd N, Las Vegas, NV 89115
Zip Codes to be Served	89030, 89115, 89110, and 89101

Process/Key Dates for pilotED – Cactus Park Elementary

- March 10, 2021 – Notice of Intent is received
- April 12, 2021 – New Charter Application Training
- July 15, 2021 – Application is received
- September 16, 2021 – Clarifying Questions sent to applicant; responses received within 3 business days
- October 7, 2021 - Capacity Interview is conducted¹
- November 5, 2021 – Recommendation is presented

¹ The pilotED: Cactus Park Elementary capacity interview was conducted virtually as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and space limitations within the SPCSA's offices.

Planned Enrollment Chart

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
K	81	81	81	81	81	81
1	81	81	81	81	81	81
2	81	81	81	81	81	81
3	54	81	81	81	81	81
4	54	54	81	81	81	81
5		54	54	81	81	81
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
Total	351	432	459	486	486	486

Executive Summary, Process and Recommendation

Upon receipt of a charter application, 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.

The review committee, which included one member of SPCSA staff and two external reviewers, identified shortcomings in one of the five components of the submitted application. The review committee and SPCSA staff find that the *Meeting the Need, Academic, Operations and Financial Plans* meet the standard as outlined in the charter application rubric. The *Addendum Section* required of an application that contemplates contracting with a Charter Management Organization (CMO) did not meet the standard as outlined in the charter application rubric.

The review committee and SPCSA staff find that the pilotED – Cactus Park Elementary application meets the demographic component and the academic component (geographies with one- and two- star schools) of the SPCSA’s Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment. The application also ‘Meets the Standard’ for the *Meeting the Need* section of the rubric. The proposal centers around social identity development, a robust civic engagement system, and a rigorous culturally relevant academic curriculum. Cactus Park Elementary intends to serve the Las Vegas and North Las Vegas communities in the four zip codes immediately surrounding the proposed school facility at the intersection of North Pecos Road and North Las Vegas Boulevard. The applicant has worked to tailor the proposal to the local community though many of the proposed partnerships are still in the early stages of development. Input on this application was requested from the Clark County School District and is expected to be provided following

the school district’s board meeting on October 28, 2021 and will be posted alongside this recommendation.

Overall, the *Academic Plan* was rated as ‘Meets the Standard’ by the review committee and SPCSA staff. The academic plan includes a strong, standards-aligned curriculum as well as blended learning and small group instruction. Through a unique identity class and a civic engagement program, the applicant would realize key components of the school model and mission. The narrative provides detailed plans for establishing a strong school culture and monitoring student growth and progress on mission-specific indicators.

Both the review committee and SPCSA staff find that the *Operations Plan* ‘Meets the Standard’ as outlined in the charter application rubric. The proposed board brings a range of expertise and demonstrates a clear understanding of the role of the board in governing the school and the role of the school’s leadership in managing day-to-day operations. While the proposed board is currently lacking a member with expertise in finance, during the capacity interview the applicant indicated that they are already working to fill this gap. In addition, the application outlines detailed plans for the incubation year and plans to renovate and develop a facility that has already been identified.

The review committee and SPCSA staff find that the *Financial Plan* ‘Meets the Standard’ as outlined in the charter application rubric. The budget is closely aligned to the proposed school model and includes realistic assumptions. While the proposed budget is heavily reliant on grant funding, the applicant has provided evidence that some of this funding has been secured and a more conservative budget scenario was provided that demonstrates how the proposed school would adjust in the event that fundraising revenues fall short of projections.

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. Overall, the review committee and SPCSA staff find that the *Addendum Section* ‘Approaches the Standard’ as defined in the charter application rubric. While the impacts of COVID-19 have limited access to statewide assessment data, there is evidence of increasing growth and a strong academic model at the flagship school in Indianapolis based on data provided by the applicant and information provided by the school’s authorizer. The flagship school’s most recent organizational performance report showed strong results though the financial performance was not meeting standards. Evidence provided through clarifying questions shows that the school has been able to build a healthy cash balance and the pilotED foundation has since raised substantial grant funding to support its growing operations. In addition, the CMO has presented a thoughtful evaluation of its readiness to expand and outlined an intentional scale strategy to enable a successful launch in Las Vegas.

For these major reasons, in addition to those outlined throughout this document, staff’s recommendation is to approve, with conditions as described below, the pilotED – Cactus Park Elementary charter application.

Proposed motion: Approve the pilotED – Cactus Park Elementary charter application as submitted during the 2021 Summer Application Cycle, with conditions outlined below, based on a finding that the applicant meets the requirements contained in NRS 388A.249(3).

1. By January 1, 2022, and before the school begins accepting student applications, provide an updated lottery policy that complies with Nevada Revised Statutes and Nevada Administrative Code.
2. By February 1, 2022, identify and onboard at least one additional board member who has experience and expertise in finance.
3. Provide a quarterly report to SPCSA staff during the incubation year on the status of fundraising

- and grant awards as well as a description of any impacts to the school's budget.
4. Provide updates regarding the newly established CMO, including (a) a copy of the fiscal year 2022 financial audit for the pilotED Foundation, once completed, and (b) notification to SPCSA staff in the event that the pilotED Foundation or an organization intending to contact with the pilotED foundation as a CMO submits an application to open a charter school in any state.
 5. Clarify terms of the consulting agreement to detail specific services to be provided during the incubation year, as outlined in the incubation plan and scale strategy.
 6. Complete the SPCSA pre-opening process for new charter schools.

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
Meeting the Need	Meets the Standard
Mission and Vision	Meets the Standard
Targeted Plan	Meets the Standard
Parent and Community Involvement	Approaches the Standard
Academic Plan²	Meets the Standard
Transformational Change	Meets the Standard
Curriculum & Instructional Design	Meets the Standard
Promotion & High School Graduation Requirements	Meets the Standard
Driving for Results	Meets 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
Operations Plan	Meets the Standard
Board Governance	Approaches the Standard
Leadership Team	Meets the Standard
Staffing Plan	Meets the Standard
Human Resources	Meets the Standard
Student Recruitment and Enrollment	Approaches the Standard
Incubation Year Development	Meets the Standard
Services	Meets the Standard
Facilities	Meets the Standard
Ongoing Operations	Meets the Standard
Financial Plan	Meets the Standard
Addendum	Approaches the Standard
Readiness for Expansion	Approaches the Standard
Scale Strategy	Meets the Standard
School Management Contracts	Approaches the Standard
Charter Management Organizations Applying Directly	Meets the Standard

² The pilotED proposal did not contemplate Distance Education, Pre-Kindergarten or Dual Credit Partnerships. Therefore, the corresponding sections of the rubric were not scored.

Meeting the Need Section

The proposed school is centered on a mission of empowering elementary students in the ways in which they see themselves in the world around them. The school model focuses on social identity development, a robust civic engagement system, and a rigorous culturally relevant academic curriculum. Cactus Park Elementary intends to serve the Las Vegas and North Las Vegas communities in the four zip codes immediately surrounding the proposed school facility at the intersection of North Pecos Road and North Las Vegas Boulevard. Based on the SPCSA's Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment, these four zip codes all have numerous one- and two- star elementary schools. Data provided in the narrative points to the need for high quality schools to serve a community in which the median family income is well below the national average and many students qualify for free and reduced-price lunch. Ultimately, the application meets two of the needs identified in the SPCSA's Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment: Demographics and Academic Need: Geographies with One- and Two-Star Schools.

The proposed board and charter management organization, the pilotED Foundation, have worked to tailor the school model, a replication of an Indianapolis school, to the community through both engaging directly with parents and families and developing the program to meet the local demographics. While many of the potential community partnerships are underdeveloped, the proposed board, principal and community engagement coordinator have deep ties to the community.

For these reasons, as well as those detailed further below, the review committee and SPCSA staff rated this section as 'Meets the Standard.'

Areas of Strength

- The application presents a clear and compelling mission that in addition to emphasizing strong academics, centers on social identity development and civic engagement. Through the proposed school model, the applicant team aims to interrupt generational cycles of poverty experienced by students and families within the community.
- The narrative presents data from a variety of sources which show a need for high quality seats to effectively serve a growing community. The application identified four zip codes, 89030, 89115, 89110, and 89101, to be served by the school, each of which has numerous one- and two-star elementary schools.
- Data provided in the application indicates that within a three-mile radius of the proposed school facility, the median family income is well below the national average and that many families face food insecurity. Additionally, the application indicates that the proposed school expects all or nearly all of the students to qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. The application goes on to articulate how the school will meet the community needs, including having a food pantry on site at the school, increasing family partnerships, and increasing after-school programming.
- While the population of the pilotED flagship school in Indianapolis serves a high percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch, the Las Vegas school is expected to serve a much larger population of English learners. During the capacity interview, the proposed principal described her experience serving English learners and representatives from the proposed charter management organization (CMO) described how they have been intentional with their plans to serve a large population of English learners.
- The proposed board, principal and community outreach coordinator have strong ties to the North Las Vegas community. In addition, the narrative indicates that the applicant held focus group, as well as Zoom and phone interviews, to determine the needs of parents in community. During the capacity interview the community outreach coordinator spoke directly about his grassroots outreach and some of the conversations he has had with the parents of prospective students.

Areas of Concern

- While the application includes a lengthy list of proposed partners, many of which provided letters of support, the majority of the partnerships appear to be in the early stages of development. In some cases, the letters of support were generic and did not speak to specific commitments. In addition, some key partners are yet to be finalized, including the organization that will assist in standing up a food pantry at the school site. Responses to clarifying questions indicate that the applicant team is actively working to solidify these partnerships.

Academic Section

The narrative provides a detailed academic plan that supports the Cactus Park Elementary mission. The instructional program is anchored on standards aligned core curricula and incorporates blended learning and small group instruction. Social studies standards will be taught through a unique identity class and curriculum that has been developed by the pilotED Foundation and is currently being piloted in schools in Clark County through the foundation's identity fellowship in order to ensure alignment to state standards. In addition, the academic plan incorporates civic engagement with developmentally appropriate activities for students in each grade level. The narrative provides detailed plans for establishing a strong school culture and monitoring student growth and progress on mission-specific indicators.

For these reasons, as well as those detailed further below, the review committee and SPCSA staff rated this section as 'Meets the Standard.'

Areas of Strength

- The theory of change and educational strategy for the proposed school centers on "rigorous academics and a conscious development of the 'self.'" With "high quality educators, a positive atmosphere, and exceptional school leadership," the applicant team believes that students will become "change agents" not only in their immediate communities but also on a larger scale. This philosophy is consistently reflected in the mission and vision as well as throughout the application.
- The key features of the instructional program, including an identity class and cross-curricular culturally relevant content, pilotPods for small group learning, blended learning, civic engagement, and outdoor learning, are supported by research and the narrative clearly defines responsible parties.
- The applicant proposes to use the Eureka Math curriculum and the Core Knowledge Language Arts curriculum for English language arts (ELA). Both of these curricula are rated as green by EdReports indicating full alignment to the common core. Amplify science, the proposed science curriculum has been approved by the Nevada Department of Education for use by school districts in Nevada, indicating alignment to the Nevada Academic Content Standards. The identity curriculum, developed by the pilotED Foundation is intended to cover all social studies standards. During the capacity interview, a representative from the CMO clarified that the identity curriculum is aligned to national standards and has already been adapted to Nevada standards. Currently, the identity curriculum is being piloted with teachers in Clark County.
- Cactus Park Elementary proposes to provide differentiated professional development to teachers. All teachers will participate in professional development during the summer and throughout the school year, participate in collaborative learning opportunities, and receive formal and informal observations and coaching. Professional development topics are closely aligned to the school mission and core elements of the model. In addition, teachers that need additional support may see intensive coaching, observe other teachers both within the school and at high-performing schools in Las Vegas, and/or receive specialized professional development.
- The narrative outlines several pieces of data that will be used to make promotion and retention decisions. In addition, several leading indicators are identified that will be reviewed beginning mid-year to identify students who may be at risk of retention and enable proactive communication with parents and families. The application acknowledges that based on the expected population and historical data for students in Clark County, the proposed school anticipates that many students will need remediation.
- The narrative outlines several mission specific goals which focus on academic components of the model and non-academic components. These goals are closely aligned to the proposed model. For example, one of the non-academic goals is focused on measuring participation in civic engagement

- activities which are central to the school's approach.
- In addition to state-required assessments, the proposed school will utilize an array of standardized and teacher-created assessments aimed at evaluating students' prior knowledge, creating small groups or pilotPods, and determining student-level goals. Assessments will include Fountas and Pinnell, NWEA MAP, daily exit tickets, topic assessments, and instructional technology assessments. The timing and frequency of assessment administration is staggered appropriately to avoid over testing and assessment data will be regularly reviewed at weekly data meetings.
 - The narrative demonstrates a thoughtful approach to ensuring tier one supports, both in the classroom and through wraparound services, are adequate to address student needs without creating an overflow of students into tiers two and three. The plan includes a continuum of programs, strategies, and supports to meet students' various needs such as pilotPods for small group instruction, intersession enrichment, and instructional technology. In addition, all teachers will provide tutoring opportunities for students at least one day per week.
 - The narrative describes a high-quality response to intervention program based on three pillars: data-based decision making, progress monitoring, and appropriate screening. This program is overseen by a committee comprised of the assistant principal/principal as well as classroom teachers, special education teachers, and teachers' aides that work directly with the students in need of supports. The application describes how specific data will be used to inform particular student interventions and gives examples of how the supports may be used in certain circumstances.
 - The narrative provides a logical plan to screen all students for IEPs through enrollment intake and through the multi-tiered system of support. The application provides details on the development of individualized education programs (IEPs) and describes how the proposed school would work to prevent over and incorrect identification. The narrative outlines a full continuum of services that will be available, including, if needed, self-contained classrooms. Additionally, a clear plan for monitoring student progress is provided, as well as information about how students may be exited from special education.
 - The procedures for identifying English language learners are well-defined, and include a home language survey, administration of placement assessments, and communications to parents and teachers. The proposed school intends to hire an EL coordinator and EL teachers with appropriate endorsements. The narrative goes on to describe both pull out and push in services that will be provided to English learners.
 - The narrative describes a school community based on the core values of perseverance, relationship building, integrity, discipline, and engagement (PRIDE). There is a plan to establish a culture of high expectations with students, families, teachers, and staff and promote positive behavior, with ongoing reinforcement through daily school events, during parent/teacher conferences, Parent University, and in all handbooks. These high expectations will be displayed, discussed, and modeled through the student experience.
 - The application indicates that the school will use restorative justice practices, such as classroom circles, to address student misbehaviors. All staff members will receive training on how to use the practices both in and out of the classroom. In addition, the proposed school plans to implement trauma-informed practices to recognize and respond to those who have been impacted by trauma.
 - In order to track daily trends in behavior, Cactus Park Elementary proposes to use the app, DeansList, which allows for information sharing between teachers, school leadership, and families. The data from DeansList will also be used to inform school culture and response to intervention decisions, lead restorative justice conferences, and identify positive and negative trends in student behavior.
 - The proposed school calendar and schedule are intentionally designed to support the school model

and students. For example, the schedule includes a longer school day from Monday to Thursday to allow for a half day on Fridays to provide time for staff meetings, professional development, and teacher collaboration. In addition, to minimize summer learning loss, the school's 180-day calendar is spread over the course of the year by having longer breaks throughout the year and a shorter summer break. Between each quarter there is a two-week break. During the first week of this break, students that have been identified for remediation will receive five additional days of instruction.

Areas of Concern

- While the narrative states that the EL coordinator will provide professional development to staff regarding the EL program and effective teaching strategies for working with English learners, the proposed frequency of at least once per semester does not seem often enough to support teacher working with a large population of English learners.
- The plan for identifying and supporting students who are experiencing homelessness is underdeveloped. While the narrative provides some general information about the use of a survey and the individuals responsible for partnering with community organizations, limited details are provided about the identification process, how needs would be assessed, and how supports would be provided.

Operations Section

The narrative sets forth staffing, recruitment, and hiring plans that support the mission and vision of the proposed school. In addition to having close ties to the community, the proposed board members bring a range of expertise and through the capacity interview demonstrated a clear understanding of their role in governing the school. While the proposed board is currently lacking a member with expertise in finance, the applicant indicated that they are already working to fill this gap during the capacity interview. The incubation year plan outlines key milestones for the launch of the school and articulates a thorough training and professional development plan for the proposed principal. In terms of facilities, Cactus Park Elementary plans to locate at 3115 N Las Vegas Blvd and has already engaged with Red Hook Capital Partners to renovate and develop the facility.

For these reasons, as well as those detailed further below, the review committee and SPCSA staff rated this section as 'Meets the Standard.'

Areas of Strength

- Members of the proposed board bring a range of experience and expertise in the areas of education, law, mental health and wellness, and business and nonprofit management. During the capacity interview, the proposed board members demonstrated significant capacity, relevant experience, and authentic passion for education and the proposed school's mission. The narrative indicates that the proposed board would participate in initial board training with a third-party organization during the summer and in response to clarifying questions, the applicant provided evidence that the board participated in training through Education Board Partners in early September.
- The narrative provides a clear delineation between the role of the board in governing and overseeing the school and the role of the school principal in the day-to-day management of the school. Through the capacity interview, the proposed board members demonstrated a firm understanding of this role. For example, after representatives of the proposed CMO were asked how they would respond if the principal wanted to adjust certain core components of the model board members made clear that core model decisions would require approval from the board and that it was the board's responsibility to ensure that the school was fulfilling the mission. In addition, the Board structure includes appropriate standing committees including academic excellence, governance, and finance.
- The proposed principal is a current assistant principal in the local school district who has ten plus years of experience teaching and leading in schools in the Las Vegas and North Las Vegas communities. While the proposed principal has only two years of experience in school leadership, the narrative describes a multi-faceted training and support plan that includes coaching from the proposed CMO as well as external professional development through nationally recognized organizations.
- The staffing plan aligns closely to the proposed school's mission and vision and includes a dean of culture, a family and community coordinator, a social & emotional health coordinator, and staff dedicated to meeting the needs of English learners and students with disabilities. While the initial review of the staffing plan raised some questions about possible discrepancies with the budget, responses provided to the clarifying questions addressed those concerns.
- The narrative outlines a rigorous hiring process for teachers. In order to recruit a staff that is representative of the student body, the school will partner with local teacher staffing organizations and the foundation has already implemented an Identify Fellowship program to develop a pipeline of potential teachers. To retain strong staff, the proposed school would provide competitive salaries, annual pay increases, merit-based bonuses, and robust benefit packages. Data from the

flagship school in Indianapolis indicates strong teacher retention with 100% of teachers from the 2020-21 school year returning in the fall of 2021.

- The application outlines a variety of outreach and recruitment strategies that demonstrates an understanding of the community likely to be served, including using local advertising partners for marketing, hosting community events that showcase elements of the school model, and social media. During the capacity interview the community outreach coordinator was able to speak to specific grassroots outreach that he has conducted to date.
- The incubation plan 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. The incubation year plan calls for the school principal and the community outreach coordinator to work full time during the incubation year to support the launch of the school and outlines a detailed plan for the training and development of the proposed leader. While the applicant is in the process of pursuing additional grant funding, \$215,000 has already been secured from NewSchools Venture Fund to support the launch of the school.
- The narrative provides intentional plans for key services. For example, the proposed school intends to provide transportation by establishing satellite bus stop locations throughout Las Vegas and focused on underserved areas. The application indicates that the school would run transportation in-house by purchasing buses and hiring bus drivers. Notably, the flagship school in Indianapolis has provided transportation through this in-house model for three years.
- The applicant has identified a facility at 3115 N Las Vegas Blvd, a location within one of the identified target zip codes and accessible to all four of the target zip codes of 89115, 89030, 89110, and 89101. The narrative outlines a plan for renovations to the existing building on the property and during the capacity interview the CMO representatives indicated that plans have already been submitted to the City of Las Vegas. The proposed board has engaged with Red Hook Capital Partners for the development of the facility and a draft lease agreement was provided as part of the application.

Areas of Concern

- The narrative lists six proposed board members, three that had already been formally onboarded and three that were expected to formally join the board in September of 2021. In response to clarifying questions, the applicant indicated that while one of the proposed members had formally joined the board, the remaining two had decided not to join the board for personal and work-related reasons. This leaves the proposed board with only four members, and notably, lacking expertise in the area of finance. When asked about this during the capacity interview, the applicant team indicated that they have identified some additional potential board members and are prioritizing adding members with expertise in either finances or school leadership.
- While the narrative outlines a number of meaningful goals that support the school model and mission, many of these goals are not measurable. In addition, while the proposed management contract has clear measurable goals and the application points to a firm commitment from the board to evaluate the CMO, the narrative does not describe the evaluation process. Additional details are needed to ensure that the board is able to measure and evaluate its own success, as well as the success of the CMO.
- The narrative and the discussion in the capacity interview indicate that the applicant may not understand the enrollment lottery requirements in Nevada. Additional work is needed to ensure the lottery policy for the proposed school complies with Nevada Revised Statutes.
- The applicant currently has demonstrated interest from 163 potential students, just under half of the first-year enrollment target. The applicant team did not collect zip codes, so it is challenging to

confirm that the demand is centered in the vicinity of the proposed school site. That said, the applicant indicates that approximately 75% of prospective students are from outreach conducted within a three-mile radius of the school, though evidence of this was not provided.

Financial Section

The budget is closely aligned with the proposed school model and includes realistic assumptions. The proposed board intends to contract with third-party providers for accounting, financial reporting, payroll, and human resources. While the proposed budget is heavily reliant on grant funding to enable the school to be financially viable, the applicant has provided evidence that some of this funding has been secured and during the capacity interview the applicant was able to identify specific areas that would be cut in the event that this grant funding was not realized. Following the capacity interview, SPCSA staff requested a copy of the more conservative budget scenario that was referenced during the capacity interview. While the significant reliance on grant funding does continue to raise some concerns, this budget scenario provided evidence that the school is likely to be financially viable.

For these reasons, as well as those detailed further below, the review committee and SPCSA staff rated this section as 'Meets the Standard.'

Areas of Strength

- The proposed budget is generally sound and aligns to the proposed school model, accounting for all expected costs. The budget narrative includes a detailed description of assumptions and describes possible responses in the event that revenues do not match projections. As presented, the proposed school anticipates a healthy surplus in each year of operation.
- In response to clarifying questions, the applicant provided information to confirm that the staffing plan aligns to the proposed budget, including both full-time and part-time employees.
- The application indicates that the proposed board intends to contract with a third-party provider, Trinet, for payroll, human resources, and benefits management. Additionally, the proposed school intends to work with Bookkeeping Plus for accounting services and financial reporting.
- In response to questions asked during the capacity interview, the applicant team was able to provide specific information about how the proposed school would adjust in the event that it did not receive funding through the Charter School Program Grant. A copy of the budget scenario reflecting these changes was provided following the capacity interview at the request of the review team. While the applicant appears to be prepared to adjust the budget in the event that some or all of the outstanding grants are not secured, concerns remain about the potential impacts to the proposed school if grant funding falls short of projections.

Areas of Concern

- The most recent financial performance report for the flagship school in Indianapolis for the 2019-20 school year shows that the school was not meeting standards at that time. However, evidence provided through the clarifying questions demonstrates that the school has been able to build a healthy cash balance of over 90-days cash on hand and the pilotED foundation has since raised substantial grant funding to support its growing operations.

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.

While the impacts of COVID-19 have limited access to statewide assessment data, there is evidence of increasing student growth at the flagship school in Indianapolis. In addition, this school appears to be outperforming other schools in the immediate community and the site evaluation report from the 2019-20 school year indicates a strong academic program. The flagship school's most recent organizational performance report showed strong results though the financial performance was not meeting standards. Evidence provided through clarifying questions shows that the school has been able to build a healthy cash balance and the pilotED foundation has since raised substantial grant funding to support its growing operations. In addition, the CMO has presented a thoughtful evaluation of its readiness to expand and outlined an intentional scale strategy to enable a successful launch in Las Vegas.

For these reasons, as well as those detailed further below, the review committee and SPCSA staff rated this section as 'Approaches the Standard.'

Areas of Strength

- The applicant and CMO present thoughtful greenlighting criteria that consider both internal and external factors and which provides evidence of the CMO's process for determining readiness for expansion. While the initial submission, based on data from the 2019-20 school year showed mixed results, the version updated with results from the 2020-21 school year shows stronger performance, helping to substantiate expansion at this time.
- While the impacts of COVID-19 have limited access to statewide assessment data, there is evidence that student performance and growth is increasing. In particular, the application reports that the flagship school in Indianapolis is noticeably outperforming neighborhood schools in math and has modestly higher performance in ELA. MAP growth data from the 2020-21 school year is also higher than the results from 2019-20 indicating that even under the unique circumstances of COVID-19 that the school is making improvements. The authorizer for the Indianapolis confirmed that MAP data from the 2020-21 school year showed a positive trajectory. Additionally, the site evaluation from the 2019-20 school year indicates that the school is meeting standards in eight of nine sections of the evaluation and approaching standards in one section.
- Organizational performance reports for the flagship school in Indianapolis show that despite some early challenges, the school is now meeting standards in each area of the authorizer's organizational performance framework.
- The applicant details a four-pronged approach to infuse the proposed Nevada school with essential elements of the school model. This approach, which relies on training school-based leadership who will then develop the school-based staff, aligns to the rest of the proposal. Given that a school leader has already been identified and the narrative outlines specific plans for developing the school leader during the incubation year, this scale strategy appears to be realistic and likely to be successful.
- The staffing plan for the CMO, provided in response to clarifying questions indicates that the recently formed pilotED Foundation has already scaled to support the development of the identity curriculum and program and that the CMO is expected to continue to expand its capacity over the coming years.
- The proposed management contract stipulates an annual fee of \$225,000, which is approximately

five percent of projected first year revenues. In addition, the applicant clarified that the contract term is one year and that the proposed board would annually determine whether to renew the contract.

Areas of Concern

- While the proposed management contract is centered on assisting the proposed school to achieve its goals, the contract lacks specificity in terms of the services that will be provided both prior to the launch of the school and once the school is open. More specificity is needed to ensure that the board will be positioned to hold the CMO accountable for supporting a successful launch and opening of the proposed school.
- The flagship school in Indianapolis is relatively new, having opened in the fall of 2018. While the application presents a strong plan for the launch of a Nevada school and the CMO demonstrates capacity to support the expansion, concerns remain about the CMO's capacity, particularly if the network expands further during the early years of Cactus Park Elementary's operations.
- The most recent financial performance report for the flagship school in Indianapolis for the 2019-20 school year shows that the school was not meeting standards at that time. However, evidence provided through the clarifying questions demonstrates that the school has been able to build a healthy cash balance of over 90 days cash on hand and the pilotED foundation has since raised substantial grant funding to support its growing operations.

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 pilotED: Cactus Park Elementary was conducted on Thursday, October 7, 2021 and lasted approximately 120-minutes. All current members of the proposed board as well as the proposed school principal and community outreach coordinator attended the interview. Additionally, two representatives from the pilotED Foundation, the proposed CMO, attended the capacity interview. Questions during the capacity interview focused primarily on these areas:

Mission and Vision	Leadership Team
Targeted Plan	Student Recruitment and Enrollment
Parent and Community Involvement	Facilities
Curriculum & Instructional Design	Financial Plan
Driving for Results	Readiness for Expansion
At-Risk Students and Special Populations	Scale Strategy
Board Governance	School Management Contracts

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 develop a plan in response to qualitative and quantitative school culture data.

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.³ 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.
- The SPCSA expects to receive input following the CCSD board meeting scheduled for October 28, 2021. This input will be posted alongside this recommendation.

³ 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.”

Appendix (Rubric Detail)

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

Meeting the Need

- Parent and Community Involvement

- *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

- At-Risk Students and Special Populations

- *The committee to form provides a clear and research-based process for identifying at-risk students, including those with academic and behavioral needs.*
- *Application includes a demonstrated track record of success serving a wide range of students with disabilities (mild, moderate, and severe).*
- *The committee to form presents a logical and systematic method according to which the school will identify homeless and/or migrant students.*
- *The timeline/plan according to which the school will assess and meet the needs of students identified as homeless and/or migrant demonstrates that students will begin receiving required services within their first semester of arriving at a new school.*

Operations Plan

- Board Governance

- *Demonstrates that the membership of the governing body will contribute the wide range of relevant knowledge, skills, and commitment needed to oversee a successful charter school, including but not limited to educational, financial, accounting, legal, and community experience and expertise, as well as special skill set to reflect school-specific programs, if applicable (e.g., STEM, fine arts, blended learning, alternative programs, etc.)*
 - *Qualifications and experience levels of governing body members with accounting and finance experience significantly exceeds the statutory minimum requirements and demonstrates a proven track record of successful management or oversight of a multi-million-dollar entity.*
- *Goals are clear and measurable, and contribute to improved academic outcomes for students and overall advancement of the organization*
- *The board puts into place a structure that enables it to collect the information it needs to evaluate the EMO/CMO, if applicable.*
- *The board articulates a clear, ambitious, data-driven set of standards and criteria that the school leader must satisfy in order to keep the school on track to achieve its vision.*

- Student Recruitment and Enrollment

- *The enrollment plan addresses lotteries, weighted lotteries, enrollment preferences, student attrition and mandatory backfilling .*
- *Complies with Nevada laws and regulations regarding enrollment, including but not limited to*
 - *Mailers sent to all households with children within a 2-mile radius of each facility.*

- *Minimum 45-day notification period followed by 45-day enrollment period OR a combined 90-day notification and enrollment period.*
- *Demonstrated interest and intent to enroll commitments by a significant number of parents for Year 1. These forms should include the following information at minimum:*
 - *Parent name and contact information*
 - *Zip code of residency*
 - *Student name(s) and grade levels for the proposed opening year*

Addendum

- **Readiness for Growth**
 - *Academic Performance data for schools affiliated with the CMO/EMO demonstrate strong performance equivalent to 4- or 5-star performance on the NSPF.*
 - *Finance Performance data for schools affiliated with the CMO/EMO demonstrate strong performance equivalent to a rating of 'meets standard' on the SPCSA's Financial Performance Framework.*
- **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:*
 - *Plan for board to monitor/evaluate the EMO/CMO's performance*
 - *Clearly outlines the roles/responsibilities of the EMO/CMO in the year prior to the school's opening. The committee to form provides a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that lists specific service agreements for this period of time.*