

Charter School Application Report

Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy Nevada

Recommendation for the Resubmitted Summer 2021 Charter Application Cycle

General Information

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

Process/Key Dates for Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy

- March 9, 2021 – Notice of Intent is received
- April 12, 2021 – New Charter Application Training
- July 15, 2021 – Application is received
- September 20, 2021 – Clarifying Questions sent to applicant; responses received within 3 business days
- October 7, 2021 - Capacity Interview is conducted¹
- November 5, 2021 – Authority denies initial application
- December 16, 2021 – Resubmitted application is received by the Authority
- January 12, 2022 – SPCSA staff discussed resubmission with the applicant team
- January 28, 2022 – Resubmission recommendation is presented to the Authority

¹ The Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy capacity interview was conducted virtually as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and space limitations within the SPCSA’s offices.

Planned Enrollment Chart

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
K	68	115	115	115	115	115
1	68	115	115	115	115	115
2	68	115	115	115	115	115
3	68	115	115	115	115	115
4	68	115	115	115	115	115
5	56	85	85	85	85	85
6	88	115	115	115	115	115
7	88	115	115	115	115	115
8	76	106	112	112	112	112
9		84	102	102	102	102
10			78	102	102	102
11				78	102	102
12					78	96
Total	648	1,080	1,182	1,284	1,386	1,404

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.

During the November 5, 2021 Authority meeting, SPCSA staff presented the findings of the initial review team and SPCSA staff for the Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy Nevada charter application which was submitted during the 2021 Summer Application Cycle. The initial application was found to exhibit shortcomings within three of the five components of the submitted application. The review team and SPCSA staff found that while the *Academic* and *Financial* plans met the standards, the proposed *Meeting the Need* and *Operations* sections did not meet the standards as outlined in the charter application rubric. Furthermore, the addendum section² required of an applicant that is a charter management organization was also found to not meet the standard. The Authority voted on November 5, 2021 to deny the Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy of Nevada application.

A second review team comprised of SPCSA staff reviewed the resubmitted Pioneer Technology &

² 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.

Arts Academy Nevada application after it was received on December 16, 2021. The review team approached rating the resubmission with two primary concentrations:

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

Upon resubmission, the review team determined that some deficiencies within the original application had been addressed, and the ratings against the charter application rubric reflect these changes. Most notably, the applicant restructured the proposed governing board of the school, replacing three former members with two, well-qualified individuals that are both Nevada residents. During the resubmission process, it became evident that these individuals possessed a clear understanding of their oversight role and responsibilities. As a result, the *Board Governance* subsection was rated as 'Meets the Standard'. Finally, the resubmission included more robust evaluation measures for the board to measure and assess the performance of the proposed CMO, SSS Education Corporation. This resulted in the *School Management Contracts* subsection being rated as 'Meets the Standard'.

While the review team identified progress in the areas listed, it also found that the application has not 'Met the Standard' in a sufficient number of application components to be recommended for approval. The review team finds that a number of deficiencies remain within the resubmitted application. Most notable is the lack of clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of the proposed CMO, particularly as it relates to the day-to-day responsibilities necessary to effectively manage the school. This concern is magnified by recent authorizer action for a school within the SSS Education Network in Arizona, which was directed to enter into a Consent Agreement due to failure to meet operational performance expectations and violation of the school's charter contract and state and federal law³.

Additional concerns include the lack of clarity around the leadership team, specifically the selection process and timeline for hiring the selected candidate. Finally, questions around student demand for the school remain as the applicant has not demonstrated that there is currently sufficient demand for this proposal outside of the relationship with the operating private school.

For these major reasons, in addition to those outlined within the remainder of this memorandum, SPCSA staff recommends that the Authority deny the Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy Nevada charter school application.

Proposed motion: Deny the Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy Nevada application as resubmitted during the 2021 Summer Application Cycle based on a finding that the applicant has failed to satisfy the requirements contained in NRS 388A.249(3).

³ On January 10, 2022, the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools (ASBCS) directed its staff to work with legal counsel to develop a consent agreement to address noncompliance with the Board's operational performance expectations, the charter contract, and state and federal law by Phoenix Education Management, LLC (also referred to as Pioneer Technology and Arts Academy of Arizona), which is part of the SSS Education Network, the proposed CMO. More information about those identified issues can be found [here](#). A summary of that meeting can be found [here](#).

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	Resubmission Rating
Meeting the Need	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
Mission and Vision	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
Targeted Plan	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
Parent and Community Involvement	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
Academic Plan⁴	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
Transformational Change	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
Curriculum & Instructional Design	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
Promotion & High School Graduation Requirements	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
Dual Credit Partnerships	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
Driving for Results	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
At-Risk Students and Special Populations	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
School Structure: Culture	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
School Structure: Student Discipline	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
School Structure: Calendar and Schedule	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
Operations Plan	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
Board Governance	Does Not Meet the Standard	Meets the Standard
Leadership Team	Does Not Meet the Standard	Approaches the Standard
Staffing Plan	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
Human Resources	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
Student Recruitment and Enrollment	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
Incubation Year Development	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
Services	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
Facilities	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
Ongoing Operations	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
Financial Plan	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
Addendum	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
Readiness for Growth	Approaches the Standard	Does Not Meet Standard
Scale Strategy	Approaches the Standard	Does Not Meet Standard
School Management Contracts	Approaches the Standard	Meets the Standard
Charter Management Organizations Applying Directly	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard

⁴ The Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy proposal did not contemplate Distance Education or Pre-Kindergarten. Therefore, the corresponding sections of the rubric were not scored.

Meeting the Need Section

The Meeting the Need section within the initial application was rated as 'Approaches the Standard' and previous strengths were determined to have remained in place upon resubmission and are detailed again below.

Within the resubmission, the applicant provided some evidence of additional community partnerships and outlined several planned events to be held in the coming months to engage with prospective families and the community.

Despite this additional information, a number of concerns identified in the initial application remain, and prevent this section from being rated as 'Meets the Standard'. The information presented in the resubmission does not provide sufficient evidence of demand for the proposed school from the target zip codes, and some of the documentation remains dated. Additionally, while the narrative and responses from the capacity interview indicate that the applicant has conducted outreach in the community, there are not clear, specific examples of how this feedback and engagement manifests itself in the proposal beyond required services and staples of the PTAA program already being implemented. Given these chief concerns, this section of the resubmission was rated as 'Approaches the Standard'.

Areas of Strength

- The mission and vision statements of PTAA Nevada are clear, focused, and appear interwoven throughout the application as the school and network seeks to help students be engaged, global leaders by progressing through a STEAM curriculum. The mission statement identifies the role of the school in working to solve the problem that the school seeks to address.
- The application proposes to serve families in a number of zip codes that are identified in the SPCSA Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment as having a large number of one- and/or two-star schools. While it is not clear that the demand for this school originates from these zip codes, the proposed location does appear to align with the geographic component of the Needs Assessment.
- Multiple members of the proposed applicant team appear to have strong ties to the local community. Additionally, the proposed CMO is currently working with a local charter school, giving them a direct tie to Clark County.

Areas of Concern

- Some evidence of demand is included in a variety of forms within the application. This includes intent to enroll forms, surveys to gauge interest, and evidence of informational meetings held in 2021. The applicant team also indicated that approximately 50,000 mailers were sent out about the proposed program during the capacity interview. However, only a subset of the provided evidence of demand are intent to enroll forms, most of which are from 2020. A majority of the stated evidence of demand comes in the form of surveys to assess interest in key components of the proposed model and satisfaction with current educational options. Additionally, the application includes evidence that over 60 parents and families attended informational meetings in 2021. While there is certainly some interest in this proposed model, it does not appear to represent a significant percentage of first year enrollment from the intended community. Within the resubmission, more recent intent to enroll forms are provided from the private school community, but the applicant has not demonstrated that there is currently sufficient demand for this proposal outside of the relationship with the operating private school⁵. More evidence is

⁵ PTAA Nevada contemplates locating in a current private school facility for year one of operations.

needed to confirm that families living in the proposed zip codes, but not attending the private school, support this model and are interested in attending PTAA Nevada.

- During the capacity interview, the applicant team spoke of open houses and forums held both at St. Christopher's as well as other locations to gauge interest in a STEAM program. Nevertheless, it is not clear how the proposed community and prospective parents were involved in developing the plan for how the PTAA model would be implemented in their community. Information from the application signals that many of the outreach and engagement efforts were intended to raise awareness about the proposal rather than to seek input that shaped the proposed program. The resubmission includes general statements about these meetings, but it is not clear that feedback from meetings resulted in concrete modifications or adjustments to the proposal. More information is needed to understand how parents, the neighborhood, and the community at-large has helped shape the proposal.
- While evidence of additional partnerships was provided in the resubmission, and proposed national partnerships continue to be well-developed, local partnerships appear to be in the early stages. Organizations named in the application and resubmission have the potential to support the needs of the target population, but many letters of support provided offer limited information about how they would directly work with the proposed school. Details such as clear, measurable, time-specific deliverables from the partner which are clearly relevant to the needs of the target population are often not provided.

Academic Section

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

Areas of Strength

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

Areas of Concern

- While it appears that most chosen curricula are aligned to Nevada Academic Content Standards, it is not clear how some of the chosen curricula will work simultaneously together and whether all final decisions have been made regarding curriculum, as noted in the incubation year plan. Ultimately, more evidence and information are needed to confirm that all proposed curricula are aligned to the Nevada Academic Content Standards.
- The applicant does describe a clear plan for internal assessments. Conflicting information was presented in the capacity interview from the narrative, and it is not clear that the applicant understands the required K-8 assessments in Nevada other than the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBAC). More information is needed to understand how the school will effectively implement both Renaissance 360 and NWEA MAP together to effectively measure and monitor individual students, student cohorts, and school level results. During the capacity interview, the CMO stated that the school will continue to adopt Renaissance 360, but it is not clear what this means for the proposed school.
- While the application emphasizes the importance of student data, performance goals for specific student groups including students with disabilities, English learners, and students who may be at-risk may not lead to a four- or five-star school as proposed. More information is needed to understand how the proposed school will monitor the performance of these student groups, and if these goals are rigorous enough to lead the school to a high rating under the Nevada School Performance Framework.

Operations Section

The Operations section within the initial application was rated as 'Approaches the Standard' and previous strengths were determined to have remained in place upon resubmission and are detailed again below.

The review committee identified progress within the resubmission in this section. Specifically, the applicant team has removed three board members and replaced them with two individuals that reside in the Las Vegas area, and appear to be qualified to serve. Board goals have been modified so as to be more robust and help guide the work of the governing body. Despite this progress, a number of concerns identified in the initial application remain, and prevent this section from being rated as 'Meets the Standard'.

Significant outstanding questions remain regarding the current state of the leadership team, as well as the process, timeline and selection of the proposed principal of the school given the information contained in the application when paired with the resubmission narrative. Another chief concern within this section is the insufficient demonstration of student demand from within the identified zip codes, as presented in the application, as the resubmission included new information for only a subset of interested students and families. concerns remain regarding the incubation year plan and the lack of comprehensive leadership plans. For these reasons, among others, this section was rated as 'Approaches the Standard'.

Areas of Strength

- The application identifies a viable educational facility that meets the needs of the students and accommodates the programmatic and operational needs of the school for at least year one. Additional information provided in responses to clarifying questions addressed initial concerns related to the first year of operations and indicates that a long-term facility will be identified by March 2022.
- The Incubation Year plan presented in the application identifies key tasks to be completed, and during the capacity interview, the applicant team was able to highlight critical-path items to prioritize throughout this period. Additionally, the incubation year plan identifies multiple individuals that will be devoting time to the proposed school, increasing the likelihood that milestones during this time are likely to be completed.

Areas of Concern

- Questions remain about the proposed school leadership team, specifically the identified acting principal and proposed regional director of the CMO.
 - In the resubmission, the applicant indicated that the previously identified principal had been changed to an 'acting principal.' The application rubric calls for a school leader with identified accomplishments related to student performance as well as evidence that the school leader is able to demonstrate strong recruitment, hiring and teacher development. If a leader has not been identified, the application rubric requires that the proposal include a clear method by which the school will recruit and select a candidate who satisfies identified criteria. Based upon the information provided in the original application and the resubmission, it remains unclear whether or not the acting principal will become the principal, and when the governing board anticipates beginning a formal process to identify and hire for the position. Additionally, the acting principal, who may become the principal, does not appear to possess administrative experience at a high school or a strong background leading the implementation of a STEAM program. While the resubmission

narrative notes that this individual has already begun to receive professional development on the PTAA model, this does not fully address all reservations and adds to the confusion about the current state of this important role.

- The regional director role is not clearly defined, and the job description and information in the narrative imply that this individual would oversee charter school staff. The decision-making flow chart indicates that the principal oversees school staff, but the regional director job description notes that this individual would coach and supervise staff. This evidence contradicts the regional director role as described in the application. More information is needed to understand how these two roles work together to support the success of the school.
- Some evidence of demand is included in a variety of forms within the application. This includes intent to enroll forms, surveys to gauge interest, and evidence of informational meetings held in 2021. The applicant team also indicated that approximately 50,000 mailers were sent out about the proposed program during the capacity interview. However, only a subset of the provided evidence of demand are intent to enroll forms, most of which are from 2020. A majority of the stated evidence of demand comes in the form of surveys to assess interest in key components of the proposed model and satisfaction with current educational options. Additionally, the application includes evidence that over 60 parents and families attended informational meetings in 2021. While there is certainly some interest in this proposed model, it does not appear to represent a significant percentage of first year enrollment from the intended community. Within the resubmission, more recent intent to enroll forms are provided from the private school community, but the applicant has not demonstrated that there is currently sufficient demand for this proposal outside of the relationship with the operating private school⁶. More evidence is needed to confirm that families living in the proposed zip codes, but not attending the private school, support this model and are interested in attending PTAA Nevada.
- The resubmission states that the proposed board will secure an MOU with the CMO for services to be provided during the incubation year. The initial application lacked clarity regarding the comprehensive leadership plan aligned to incubation year and academic goals. While a proposed MOU is provided in the resubmission, it does not provide additional clarity and information on how and when the principal will be trained.

⁶ PTAA Nevada contemplates locating in a current private school facility for year one of operations.

Financial Section

The Financial section within the initial application was rated as 'Meets the Standard'. The resubmission provided minimal new and/or additional information that would result in any changes to the individual subsections or entire Financial section. As such, the review committee determined that the previous strengths remained in place, while one concern was addressed and has since been removed from this summary. This resulted in a 'Meets the Standard' rating for this section of the resubmission.

The submitted application underscores that the CMO possesses financial expertise and has extensive experience in financial management, which was reiterated during the capacity interview. The budget narrative demonstrated an understanding of local context, and this expertise would help guide the proposed governing board through regular reporting that uses multi-year budgets, historical data as well as cash flow projections. Finally, the proposed facility represents a potential windfall in terms of cost savings for at least year one as the school is able to obtain a lease rate significantly below market value.

While this section was rated as 'Meets the Standard', one minor concern remains. The resubmission indicates that PTAA Nevada will have the ability to access a Line of Credit through the proposed CMO. This raises some questions about the ability of the proposed board to hold the CMO accountable for services given that the proposed school would potentially be financially obligated to the CMO as early as the incubation year. Nevertheless, this section was rated as 'Meets the Standard.'

Areas of Strength

- The CMO has financial expertise to assist the school with financial management, oversight, and day to day operations if needed. This was reiterated during the capacity interview when CMO representatives assisted the proposed board with addressing financial questions and concerns.
- The budget narrative presents a baseline understanding of GAAP principles, and demonstrates a basic understanding of Nevada context and budgeting concepts. The narrative notes that the Board will annually review a three-year budget, historical income and expenses, and a cashflow forecast for the upcoming year.
- Evidence presented in the application indicates that PTAA schools in operation in Texas are performing soundly and meeting financial performance standards.
- During the capacity interview, the CMO representatives noted that despite a very favorable, below-market lease rate for the proposed year one facility, the current budget notes that forecasted substantial expenditures are still included as anticipated expenses for years one through six. If the proposed facility is secured for at least year one, this would positively impact the financial health of the school.

Areas of Concern

- The resubmission indicates that PTAA Nevada will have the ability to access a Line of Credit through the proposed CMO. This raises some questions about the ability of the proposed board to hold the CMO accountable for services given that the proposed school would potentially be financially obligated to the CMO as early as the incubation year.

Addendum Section

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

The Addendum section within the initial application was rated as 'Approaches the Standard' and previous strengths were determined to have remained in place upon resubmission and are detailed again below. Academic performance data included in the application indicates that PTAA schools in Texas, which represent the original network of schools, are performing well according to the state accountability system. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the most recent ratings are from the 2018 – 19 school year, and all schools were issued one of the two highest ratings. Additionally, contract terms between the proposed board and CMO appear reasonable given the scale of services described in the narrative.

Several concerns were identified in this section, however, including the capacity of the proposed CMO to effectively scale and support the proposed school, and inconsistencies in the scale strategy that fail to provide clarity around roles and responsibilities. Perhaps most important, recent data and information from Arizona indicates that PTAA-Arizona⁷, which is described in the application as being part of the SSS Education Network was found to have failed to meet the operational performance expectations set forth in the Arizona authorizer's operational performance framework and has violated its charter contract and state and federal law. On January 10, 2022, the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools directed its staff to work with legal counsel to develop a consent agreement to address this noncompliance. This raises significant questions about the CMO's readiness to grow and the success of previous efforts to scale. Finally, the past performance of the CMO in Nevada, through its support of 100 Academy, raises additional questions about its ability to support a high-quality program in the first years of operation. For these reasons and others, this section of the application was rated as 'Approaches the Standard'.

Areas of Strength

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

Areas of Concern

- Recent operational performance and compliance concerns arising from the affiliate school in Arizona, for which PTAA assumed operations in July of 2021, raise significant capacity concerns and

⁷ The official name of the Charter Holder which operates the school is Phoenix Education Management, LLC.

raise questions about the CMO's readiness to grow. The five-year interval review compliance report for this school, dated January 27, 2021, notes only one compliance concern. A second, similar [review](#) was conducted on September 29, 2021 after the affiliate of the proposed Nevada CMO assumed operational control of the school. As noted on pages 19-23, for each of the operational standards evaluated, the school was deemed to not meet operational standards. This resulted in authorizer intervention on January 10, 2022. Specifically, the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools found that the school had failed to meet the operational performance expectations set forth in the Board's operational performance framework and has violated its charter contract and state and federal law. The Board exercised its legal discretion and rather than issuing a notice of intent to revoke the charter contract, the Board directed its staff to work with legal counsel to develop a consent agreement to address the school's noncompliance. While SPCSA staff has confirmed with the Arizona authorizer that the school is now in compliance in these areas, the number of compliance concerns occurring shortly after the CMO assumed operational control of the school raise significant capacity concerns about the CMO and its ability to support another school this upcoming fall. Additionally, they raise questions about the success of prior attempts to scale to other states.

- During the capacity interview, the CMO was asked about how it evaluated readiness to expand. The CMO indicated that expansion had been driven by invitations or demand from other states, but did not discuss how the CMO had determined that the organization was ready to support additional schools. Limited new information was provided in the resubmission to support this organization's readiness to expand, and as previously noted, SPCSA staff has significant concerns about the organizational performance of the CMO and its affiliates due to recent findings in Arizona.
- Questions remain about the CMO and their readiness to open and support a high performing school in Nevada. Currently, the proposed CMO is supporting 100 Academy, a public charter school authorized by CCSD. 100 Academy is partially meeting state standards according to the most recent Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) for both the elementary and middle school and the latest available data for 100 Academy indicates that proficiency levels have not improved. While the relationship between the CMO and 100 Academy is relatively new and the impacts of COVID-19 have likely affected the implementation of the program and ability to collect reliable student assessment data, available data does not demonstrate that the CMO has been able to implement a program that has driven significant academic gains for students in Nevada.
- Inconsistencies were identified between the written application and the capacity interview regarding the services to be provided by the proposed CMO. The draft contract provided in the written application indicates that the CMO will be significantly involved in the proposed school, but the narrative describes the CMO as primarily a "back office" provider. For example, proposed contract contemplates many day-to-day responsibilities such as the implementation of the educational program and services to special needs students. Additional information is needed to understand the roles and responsibilities of the CMO.
- Previous findings from a financial audit provided in the initial application raise questions about internal financial policies and procedures.

Capacity Interview Summary

Based on the independent and collective review of the application, the review committee conducted a virtual capacity interview of the applicant to assess the capacity to execute the application’s overall plan. The capacity interview for Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy Nevada was conducted on Thursday, October 7, 2021 and lasted approximately 120-minutes. Various representatives of the proposed CMO were present at the interview, in addition to all members of the proposed board with one exception. Questions during the capacity interview focused primarily on these areas:

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

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

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

Meet and Confer

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

District Input

Per Assembly Bill 462 (2019), now codified in NRS 388A.249, the SPCSA solicited input from the Clark County School District regarding this application.⁸ The timeline regarding this request for input is below and the response provided by the Clark County School District is attached.

- August 5, 2021 – Memo sent to CCSD soliciting input.
- November 1, 2021 – Written input provided from CCSD to SPCSA.
- November 24, 2021 – Written notification from the SPCSA to CCSD regarding the denial of the original Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy Nevada charter application.
- January 4, 2022 – Written notification to CCSD confirming that the Pioneer Technology & Arts

⁸ 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.”

Academy resubmission had been received. The SPCSA provided a tentative timeline for possible action on the Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy resubmitted application, and provided CCSD with an opportunity to provide additional input.

Appendix (Rubric Detail)

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

Meeting the Need

- **Targeted Plan**
 - *Clear and compelling rationale for the selected community based on academic or demographic need.*
 - *Clear and comprehensive explanation of how the proposed model meets identified community needs.*
 - *Demonstrated capacity, credible plans, and thorough research and analysis in order to intentionally serve the identified student populations, prevent at-risk students from dropping out, and/or provide more high-quality schools in underserved areas, as defined in the Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment*
- **Parent and Community Involvement**
 - *Demonstrates clear evidence of the involvement of parents, neighborhood, and/or community members representative of target population in the development of the plan. The application establishes that the local community has helped shape the final school proposal.*
 - *Identifies specific partnerships which are shown to be relevant to the needs of the target population, including partners located in the community that the applicant intends to serve.*
 - *Partnerships are evidenced by specific letters of commitment outlining the accountabilities of both parties and clear, measurable, time-specific deliverables from the partner which are clearly relevant to the needs of the target population.*

Academic Plan

- **Curriculum and Instructional Design**
 - *A clear explanation, supported by evidence, demonstrating how the school's academic program, including the curriculum, aligns to the Nevada Academic Content Standards, including both the Common Core Academic Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards, and that the school teaches all required subjects at each grade level.*
- **Driving for Results**
 - *Internal and mission-specific goals are SMART: goals and objectives are specific, measurable, ambitious and attainable, relevant, and time bound.*
 - *The assessment plan is sufficiently detailed to demonstrate collection and analysis of individual student, student cohorts, school level, and network-level performance over time (interim, annual, year over year), including a clear process for setting and monitoring ambitious academic goals.*
 - *Sound plan for measuring and reporting academic performance and progress of students for both individual schools and the network (if applicable).*
- **At-Risk Students and Special Populations**
 - *The Committee to Form provides a logical method supported by research according to which they will assess the needs of at-risk students. The Committee to Form also outlines a continuum of programs, strategies, and supports that corresponds with the needs identified for each student and is supported by research.*
 - *The Committee to Form outlines the methods according to which the school will remediate academically underperforming students, including the system according to which the school will track progress, facilitate teacher collaboration, and the research supporting the school's*

remediation strategy.

Operations Plan

- **Leadership Team**
 - *The leadership accomplishments of the school leader or leadership team are demonstrable with empirical data related to student performance as well as the recruitment, hiring, and development of a highly effective staff.*
 - *If identified, school leadership team resumes demonstrate a range of experience including leadership at a high-performing and/or high growth school with management responsibilities, experience establishing a high-performing culture with students and staff, and responsibility for significant student achievement gains with target demographics.*
 - *If the school leader is not yet identified, the committee to form explains the method by which they will recruit and select a candidate who satisfies the criteria listed in the job description.*
 - *Provides a comprehensive plan for coaching, support and evaluation of school leadership.*
- **Staffing Plan**
 - *Staffing plans matches the proposed budget and is explicitly aligned to both budget narrative assumptions and to budget calculations.*
 - *Sound understanding of staffing needs necessary for the new school(s) proposed.*
- **Human Resources**
 - *Articulates process for recruiting and hiring high quality teachers and leaders.*
 - *Articulates a recruitment and hiring plan that will result in a school staff reflective of the student body.*
 - *School performance management system is likely to retain and promote talented staff, allows for re-structuring and removal of staff as needed, creates opportunities for leadership development, and sets clear expectations.*
- **Student Recruitment and Enrollment**
 - *Complies with Nevada laws and regulations regarding enrollment, including but not limited to:*
 - *Minimum 45-day notification period followed by 45-day enrollment period OR a combined 90-day notification and enrollment period.*
 - *Demonstrated interest and intent to enroll commitments by a significant number of parents for Year 1. These forms 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*
- **Services**
 - *Operations plan includes logical plans for all essential and program-specific non-academic services, including but not limited to:*
 - *Staff structure/plan is adequate for the proposed school and aligns with the educational program; lines of authority are clear.*
- **Incubation Year Development**
 - *Outlines comprehensive leadership development plans that include training aligned with incubation year goals as well as stated academic goals (these may be either designed by or outsourced by the operator).*

Addendum

- **Readiness for Growth**
 - *Criteria for evaluating readiness for expansion are comprehensive and demonstrate high expectations for academic, financial, and organizational performance.*
 - *Academic Performance data for schools affiliated with the CMO/EMO demonstrate strong performance equivalent to 4- or 5-star performance on the NSPF.*
 - *Organizational Performance data for schools affiliated with the CMO/EMO demonstrate strong performance equivalent to a rating of 'meets standard' on the SPCSA's Organizational Performance Framework.*
 - *The three most recent audits of the EMO/CMO and existing schools show no material findings.*
- **Scale Strategy**
 - *The plan to scale the model to new sites is adequately resourced and staffed appropriately.*
 - *Previous scale-up endeavors are shown to have been successful with student performance data, organizational and financial data (if applicable).*
 - *Organization has sufficient infrastructure (or plan to develop same) to support the proposed network of schools, including shared services and the costs associated with them.*
 - *Organization charts clearly indicate lines of authority between the board, network, and schools.*
- **School Management Contracts**
 - *Clear, appropriate delineation of roles and responsibilities between the management organization and the school site(s)*
 - *Clearly outlines the roles/responsibilities of the EMO/CMO in the year prior to the school's opening. The committee to form provides a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that lists specific service agreements for the period of time.*