COMMUNITIES OF EXCELLENCE

IDAHO'S CHARTER SCHOOLS PROGRAM GRANT

APPLICATION DETAILS

School Name: Elevate Academy Nampa	
Contact Person: Jewels Carpenter	Contact Email: jcarpenter@elevate2c.org
Application Type: Start Up	Grant Budget: $800,000
Grades Served: 6-12	New Seats Created: 486
Application Status: Funded	

RUBRIC

A. Grant Project Goals

Identify 3-5 grant project goals and *justify* each goal in terms of its value in supporting the planning and implementation of your proposed school. ***All grant spending, including future revisions to your budget, must fit clearly within one of your stated project goals.***

Reviewer Comments – Grant Project Goals

Strengths:

- Goals align to the vision and mission of the school, are justified and include measurable outcomes.
- It is exciting to see goals focusing on industry-recognized certification in addition to monitoring ISAT achievement. Elevate's attendance goal is also rigorous and well justified.
- Four goals are presented with trackable measures for each. Goals speak to meeting or exceeding Idaho's achievement and growth requirements on the statewide assessments for both English Language Arts and Math, which will be also measured by STAR assessment growth data. Goals align with charter and mission/vision of the school. Goals include CTE opportunities and industry certifications as advanced opportunities for high school students. Goal 3 speaks to targeting student demographics within 5% of local demographics, and the school projects serving higher numbers off minority and educationally disadvantaged students than surrounding districts. Attendance at 90% is also set as a goal, which is important given the low overall statewide attendance rate of 82%.

Weaknesses:

- Grant Project Goals do not seem to provide a framework to ensure all proposed CSP grant expenditures are aligned with at least one goal. The justification for selecting these performance goals do not explicitly align with proposed grant activities, and the justification for the level of rigor for the goals is not clear.

B. Educational Philosophy, Instructional Practices, and Curriculum
Fully *describe and justify* the design of the academic program in terms of the educational philosophy, instructional practices, and curriculum that will be utilized to meet the school's performance objectives. Be sure to include key design elements, references supporting its validity and alignment to state and federal requirements, and rationale for why this education model was chosen and how it will produce strong outcomes for the unique community and student population the school will be located within.

Reviewer Comments - Educational Philosophy, Instructional Practices, and Curriculum
Strengths:
- A Youth-Peer Court is part of the discipline process that is overseen by a teacher but implemented by students. This system of support is recognized by the Canyon County Juvenile Court system.
- The day begins with supportive strategies that allow students to stay on track academically as well as socially and emotionally. Students plan their own schedules based on individual needs. The day ends with a debriefing and next day goal setting is implemented by the student, clearly placing responsibility for learning with the students and supported by staff.
- A multitude of career pathways are available for students to choose from in either 10 or 5-week cycles, depending on grade levels. Students track progress through a learning management system. Students work toward mastery of learning targets aligned to state academic and workforce standards.
- Teachers loop with students on a two year cycle.
- All students are engaged in an integrated and inclusive model of education and based on individual needs are educated in small group or individual settings.
- Industry partners facilitate instruction in some of the classes.
- This section of the application was extremely detailed and specific. It was easy to get a sense of how Elevate's students would experience school. The description of technology use was especially interesting (using chrome books to track progress against standards, schedule their weeks using Google calendar, etc.), and it did not focus purely on assessment. It was helpful to learn how much time students will spend in each cycle and how they narrow their areas of focus over the course of their years at the school.
- All curriculum was named and adequately justified.
- Elevate's focus on transportation in order to ensure students are at school is clear and aligns well with the stated goals and vision of the school.
- The applicant presents a compelling educational program with clear, research-based philosophy and instructional approach (e.g., PBL, Power 100, use of pathways, curriculum integration, etc.).
- Behavioral expectations, enrichment program, and other relevant factors are clearly articulated between the grant application and the attached charter document.
- The curriculum approach presented is relevant and engaging, with the educational program a good match to the needs of the targeted student demographic.
- 1:1 devices and specialized technology for CTE is presented in alignment with the academic, assessment, and student needs.
- Autonomies and flexibilities utilized by the school are articulated.

Weaknesses:
- Correlations between research and projected school demographic information was not identified. No research was cited.
- The application could have done with an example of how Elevate plans to align core content and CTE standards (e.g., for one block of standards in one subject and grade).
- In general, this section lacks cited and noted evidence and research to demonstrate and justify the selected curricular and instructional approach.
- Elevate Nampa appears to replicate the organization's existing model begun at the Caldwell campus, yet no data regarding performance of that campus is presented.
- While curricular resources are identified, as well as the curricular approach, there is little justification for the suitability of the curriculum toward meeting standards (for example, through a standards scope and sequence that demonstrates how curricular resources will be utilized to deliver set standards).

- Staff and classroom technology needs are not clearly addressed.

C. Teaching and Learning

Fully *describe and justify* the design of the instructional strategy in terms of the educational philosophy, instructional practices, and curriculum that will be utilized to meet the school's performance objectives. Be sure to include key design elements, references supporting its validity and alignment to state and federal requirements, and rationale for why this strategy was chosen and how it will produce strong outcomes for the unique community and student population the school will serve.

Reviewer Comments – Teaching and Learning

Strengths:

- Learning targets are aligned with standards that are written in student friendly language. Students know the expectations up front in regard to project outcomes.
- Students are assessed in multiple formats (formal and informal) to determine if standards are met. Benchmark testing is used to determine starting points of instruction as well as differentiation and where students fall in the formal RTI process as well as how students' needs will be met in a special education setting.
- Meeting the needs of specific high needs students (SPED, ENL, intervention) was explained.
- The explanation of Learning Hooks and how students will use them to show mastery again was helpful in understanding how students will experience learning at Elevate.
- It is appreciated the application was clear that the STAR assessment is a key tool.
- Across sections B & C, various design features of the educational program are articulated, such as integrated educational philosophy and PBL curricular approach. A 4-part "Learning Hook" is introduced as a visible learning process structure for lesson delivery. Scaffolding of lessons for mastery is clearly described through use of the "Learning Hook" and cognitive conflict.
- A variety of classroom assessments (formative, summative, portfolios, demonstrations, performance projects) and standardized assessments (diagnostic, CTE, STAR, Workplace Readiness, state assessments) are identified for use by the school, as well as how STAR assessment data will be utilized for intervention under the school's RTI system.
- Several systems for intervention and tiers of support are identified, both in the grant application and the charter document.

Weaknesses:

- Again, it would have been good to see an example of a Learning Hook for one standard.
- The description of how Elevate will use various data to monitor progress was vague and simply listed out data sources without distinguishing how they would be used.
- There was little explanation of how the learning model would be adjusted for students with special needs.
- The intervention (RTI) and MTSS systems are not identified, and it is not clear how teachers will ensure differentiation and supports to meet individual student learning needs.
- While a variety of assessments are identified, it is not articulated how these assessments will be utilized to drive instruction and differentiation of learning across the school (though this is touched on at a high level in section D).
- Specific instructional delivery methods were not presented in this section. While these are presented elsewhere within the application, they are not described in a way that fully meets the criteria of this section.

D. Student Academic Achievement Standards
As an independently governed public school, charter schools need to ensure plans, systems, and tools for strong oversight and monitoring in the areas of academic performance. In this section, persuade the reader that your school will have rigorous goals and adequate oversight to ensure quality implementation, operation, and accountability.

Reviewer Comments – Student Academic Achievement Standards
Strengths:
- Teachers and administrators will be trained on formative assessment practices as well as data collection. PLCs will be utilized to analyze data and will be correlated to intervention strategies.
- ISAT data and STAR testing data is cross-walked on an annual basis to ensure benchmark data correlates with state accountability reporting.
- The chosen assessment tools are appropriate and aligned with the school's academic program. The commitment to ensure STAR data are aligning with ISAT outcomes is strong.

Weaknesses:
- Monitoring teacher performance in this section was not mentioned, nor was how data is (or will be) utilized to inform policy and management decisions.
- The application could have used more detail regarding how data will be used and by whom. Aside from noting that teachers will meet in PLCs, this area was lacking.
- The practice of teacher reflection and use of data was not fully articulated in the grant application but was covered a bit more in some attachments. While there is a plan for performance management and setting of benchmarks, information could have been more clearly presented to demonstrate that analysis of the projected student population had been done to identify initial/anticipated interim benchmarks.
- It is not clear what data systems will be utilized for housing and analyzing data.

E. Student Demand and Community/Local Support
Schools funded under the CSP subgrant must ensure they are in tune with their communities' needs and priorities. In this section schools will document their vitality and long-term sustainability through demonstrating their dedication to developing and maintaining community partnerships and connections.

Reviewer Comments – Student Demand and Community/Local Support
Strengths:
- A program such as this does not exist in the school district. A partner school in the Caldwell School District has had great success with this demographic.
- The school has obtained letters of support from multiple city and state entities.
- Marketing strategies include a variety of strategies (door-to-door, social media, community functions, etc.) Community partners are helping in recruitment efforts around the city.
- This portion of the application is strong. Elevate is going above and beyond to serve the Hispanic population in their region, investing in Spanish language materials and also engaging the Hispanic community in outreach, recruitment, and involvement with the school.
- It is noteworthy that the school plans on using industry experts to inform its CTE focus and a parent group for feedback.
- It is reassuring to see that the application acknowledges Elevate's break even point for its first year of operation.
- Elevate Nampa is offering a CTE-enriched program to all students grades 6-12 that otherwise would only be available to high school who were on track academically, which is an effective strategy to motivate and engage students through their interest in CTE programs.
- With less than 7% of at-risk students having access to alternative programming, it appears there could be sufficient demand.
- The school has identified a target number for Year 1 enrollment, as well as a minimum number required for fiscal feasibility. The recruitment plan is intended to begin July 2021 for Fall 2022 opening and includes sound strategies and funding for engaging families to enroll students from a variety of student subgroups.
- Exceptional networking and partnering with community organizations is demonstrated. Technical Advisory Committees and Parent advisory committee to engage parents and community members.

Weaknesses:
- Strategies for recruitment could have been more specific, but a recruitment plan was found in the attached charter document. No figures are presented to show the current engagement thus far, and the extent to which that has resulted in student interest in attending.
- While student demographic data is included, it is not articulated how these data points were arrived at.
- Strategies for ongoing parent and family engagement were not articulated.

F. Effectively Serving All Students
Charter schools are obligated to take specific actions to ensure an open, fair, non-selective method of attracting and enrolling students, and all charter schools need to be ready to serve the group of students that choose to attend. In this section, describe your plan to offer a continuum of services for all types of students, including those that are educationally disadvantaged (such as low-income, special education, English learners, homeless, migrant and other at-risk students) and gifted and talented.

Reviewer Comments – Effectively Serving All Students
Strengths:
- School leaders will conduct a "1 on 1" intake meeting with each student to determine if students meet the criteria of an at-risk student under Idaho Code.
- Added value for students include individual showers, laundry room, barber shop and mental wellness counseling. All are provided within the facility.
- The school is working toward qualifying for the Community Eligibility Provision in order to serve free breakfast and lunch to all its students.
- The school is ensuring students have wheelchair accessibility on busses. Bus routes include 5-6 routes daily n order to reduce transportation needs for this targeted population. Busses will be utilized for various activities beyond to and from school. The school is purchasing 6 busses to meet the needs of all students.
- The detail in this portion of the application is outstanding. Elevate is clearly serious about serving their target population and is making substantial investments to be able to do this well. Examples are busing and meals for all students, showers, and a barber shop on campus.
- The school is also working to ensure that language will not be a barrier for any student.
- Elevate is committing to having a deep understanding of the needs of each of its students – the application describes not only a detailed intervention system but also 1:1 intake meetings with each student.
- The applicant demonstrates a thoughtful understanding of the needs of the school's educationally disadvantaged students through seeking out partnerships, programming, and staffing specifically to meet the behavioral, mental health, physical, and learning needs of students of EL, SPED, at-risk, and housing insecure populations.
- Some training of staff is articulated (eg. Nonviolent Crisis Intervention).
- Bus routes provided, along with sports/extra-curricular bus, to demonstrate support for students' transportation needs.

Weaknesses:
- Many areas of this section address the "what" of the criteria, but not the "how," which would help provide stronger evidence.
- Better articulation of how the budget aligns to serving all students, particularly those disadvantaged, would strengthen this section.

G. Staffing and Professional Development Plan
Describe the approach to staffing, inclusive of ratios, positions, etc. required for effective implementation of the chosen education model. Further, describe the process in which all staff will be supported in their ongoing professional development.

Reviewer Comments – Staffing and Professional Development Plan
Strengths:
- Small class sizes benefit the targeted population. Hiring will be done early in order to ensure training for any CTE teachers that need to be certified before school begins. Spanish speakers will be a priority in the hiring process as diversity of staff is emphasized.
- Collaborative training, development of integrated curricula and understanding of each other's content area allows co-teaching and the building of personal relationships.
- An Elevate Liaison supports PD between all Elevate Academy schools.
- Professional development and training covers a wide range of practices and strategies that will ensure a great start to the school year and beyond.
- Peer observation and co-planning are tenants that help ensure a collaborative learning community.
- Again, the application shows Elevate's focus on meeting the needs of the Hispanic population they intend to serve. The staffing plan appears appropriate and includes sufficient coaching and feedback strategies.
- The application articulates for recruiting quality staff early so that they can achieve certification prior to school launch.
- Articulation of coaching for instructional staff.
- Staff retreat and PD on educational model core elements is included.
- Use of lead teachers to assist with teacher training and coaching.
- Use of Danielson Framework for teacher evaluation.

Weaknesses:
- Staffing structure was not presented in the narrative, but was found within the 3-year budget.
- Retention of staff has not been addressed.
- The application contains limited information on how Elevate plans on retaining its teachers.
- The staffing plan does not provide detail on number of certified staff per content area to verify all content areas will be sufficiently covered by qualified staff.
- PD content is not fully detailed, without a timeline to show every programmatic element is included. General language is used regarding PD content, schedule, and coaching, when more detail would be helpful.
  **Note: tuition for certifications appears to be included in the proposed grant program, and this is usually considered an ineligible expense by the federal program.

H. Financial Management and Monitoring Plan

As independently governed public schools, charters are fully responsible for ensuring quality financial management practices and ongoing financial stability. In this section, explain your school's plan to be compliant, strategic, and responsible with finances and business services.

Reviewer Comments – Financial Management and Monitoring Plan

Strengths:
- Elevate Academy is partnering with Building Hope and will use the same facility blueprint as their sister school in Caldwell. The facility will adequately serve the targeted population and meet the vision and mission of the school.
- Nothing in Elevate's budget narrative seems inappropriate and costs align with the school's commitments as described in the application.
- Resources needed, deadlines, and requirements listed in the budget narrative indicate Elevate's leadership has a solid understanding of what they must to do open the school.
- A CSP budget narrative is provided that articulates the areas for which CSP funding is requested. It includes sufficient detail to determine timeline for purchases. The CSP budget template and 3-year operating budget are included.
- A facility location is identified, with plans corresponding to the existing campus.
- A "Break-Even" budget is provided to allow student recruitment to drop as low as 290 (85% of desired enrollment) and still be financially viable.

Weaknesses:
- Key personnel is not mentioned of who is responsible for implementation of various portions of the CSP grant.
- This section was weak overall. The operating budget provided is too high level and does not include sufficient detail to address the elements of the selection criteria. As a result, it is difficult to determine assumptions and if they are reasonable.
- Proposed grant expenditures do not seem to align with specific grant project goals.
- No overall total for expenditures is provided, thus making it difficult to determine level of surplus/deficit, reserves, or cash flow.
- No articulation of qualifications of finance/operations staff or specific plans to mitigate risk beyond marginally lower enrollment.
- The specific details of the facility are not articulated beyond their comparison to the existing campus. Facility costs are slightly high at 22% for Year 1 (24% for the "Break-Even" budget) but reduce to 20% by Year 3.
- Staff for implementing grant are not identified.

I. Board Capacity and Governance Structure
A competent, trained governing board is essential to the success of a public charter school. In this section the school will demonstrate how it has developed a strong governing board with a diverse set of skills. Board members should understand their roles and responsibilities and have in place a transition plan and ongoing professional develop to maintain board strength going forward.

Reviewer Comments – Board Capacity and Governance Structure
Strengths:
- A table of Board Composition Profile & Terms of Service was provided that easily describes areas of expertise of board members.
- Elevate's board of directors appears to be fit for the job. Policies and procedures outlined in the application are appropriate for a governing board.
- Elevate appears to have a strong plan for maintaining and improving the board's skills and capacity to govern the school.
- One combined network board with diversified expertise.
- A skills matrix identifying expertise for each board member is provided.
- Articulates established conflict of interest form and compliance with Open Meeting and Public Record laws.
- The board recognizes its public accountability for financial, academic, and operational outcomes of Elevate Academy.
- Comprehensive professional development of the board is articulated, including an annual self evaluation.

Weaknesses:
- Not clear if there are any board members that represent the Nampa community. No articulation of full scope of existing board policies and procedures, and so it is not clear the extent to which the board can and does exercise oversight.

J. School Leadership and Management
This section should describe the intended leadership structure of your school and demonstrate a strong leadership and staffing plan that ensures high-quality implementation and sustainability of the school.

Reviewer Comments – School Leadership and Management
Strengths:
- School leadership is strong with a vast amount of experience working with the targeted population and community leaders and partnerships.
- The application adequately explains the division of labor between Elevate Academy Caldwell and the Nampa team, which seems to be a well-arranged partnership and appropriate in terms of roles and responsibilities.
- The school leaders appear strong and well qualified.
- Division of responsibilities between school leadership positions and network positions (CEO & Professional Services) are clearly outlined.
- A board-approved "RAPID" framework describes the organizational structure and decision-rights.
- The application articulates that the CEO holds accountable the school leader, rather than the board directly.
- Both administrators for Elevate Nampa have experience working together as administrators at a nearby high school.
- The Principal has recently participated as a BLUUM Fellow.

Weaknesses:
- Operational challenges and key risk factors the school may face have not been identified.
- There was no discussion or risks or mitigation strategies in this section.
- It is unclear how the board will hold the CEO accountable for operations, finances, and academic outcomes at the school.
- The application does not specifically identify key risk factors that the school may face or potential material operational challenges.

Overall comments

Reviewer Comments

- A school such as Elevate Academy provides an educational option that is not currently in the district.
- Elevate Academy is supported by another Elevated Academy in a near-by district.
- School leadership has vast experience working with the targeted population.
- School partnerships within the city and state are strong.
- Students from the near-by Elevate Academy are part of student recruiting strategies.
- Early hiring of staff and training helps to ensure a successful first year.
- Overall, this evaluator found very little weaknesses within this grant application.
- Elevate's application was a great example of a school being clear about its priority and focus areas. The focus on at-risk and Hispanic students as a target population, and CTE as the area of academic focus, was present throughout the narrative and budget documents.
- The application gave concrete and reasonable details regarding how it would meet the needs of its target populations and develop a teaching staff that could deliver on Elevate's academic goals.
- The application acknowledged its target enrollment but did not discuss mitigation if that target is not reached.
- It also could have done with some examples of how students would experience the blend of CTE and academic standards in the classroom.
- The applicant presents an application that follows the outline of the selection criteria. A compelling educational model is presented that seems well-suited for the student population the school is seeking to serve.
- The design is forward thinking and presents a lot of elements missing from the broader secondary education landscape. The applicant has paid particular attention to designing a program that meaningfully addresses the learning, social/emotional, and physical needs of the targeted student population.
- The application as a whole presents an exciting vision, but lacks specificity. Many area address the "what" of the criteria, but not the "how," which would help provide stronger evidence. As a result, what the program will look like in practice and the justification for design choices are not clear.