



COMMUNITIES OF EXCELLENCE

IDAHO'S CHARTER SCHOOLS PROGRAM GRANT



APPLICATION DETAILS

School Name: Elevate Academy, East Idaho	
Contact Person: Logan Waetje	Contact Email: lwaetje@elevate208.org
Application Type: Start Up	Grant Budget: \$600,719.71
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:**

- The goals clearly align with the requirements of the RFA, with the school's mission and with the greater Elevate organization.
- The school has eight different pathways for success both in vocational and post-secondary education opportunities. Students will be certified in one to two pathways upon graduation.
- At risk has been clearly defined.
- In-take meetings are held with parents and student/s and administrators in order to document “at risk” behaviors and to qualify for the program.
- Graduates of the school will have 2 different CTE pathway industry certificates. Pathways will be determined based on in-demand trades in the local community which will allow for relevance and community partnerships.
- Core academic standards will be integrated into authentic projects to support growth towards Idaho performance standards.
- 100% of high school students will complete industry certifications in at least 1 of 8 CTE program offerings and 75% will complete 2.
- The school seeks to serve a high at-risk student population.

Weaknesses:

- How is the in-take meeting conducted if a student is emancipated or an unaccompanied youth?

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:**

- The school is based upon previously-successful educational practices at their other schools, especially with graduation rates.
- CTE concepts and skills are woven with literacy and math skills for an integrated approach.
- A positive culture and providing The Hope Theory to its students is core to the model.
- Curriculum is purpose-driven giving students opportunities to understand the significance of why and what they are learning.
- Community partnerships have been developed in order to prioritize opportunities for both the student and the community.
- A year-round calendar has been developed allowing students more time for skill and personal development and less time to engage in negative opportunities in the community.
- The school will use 6 core values that are geared towards supporting at-risk youth, to drive decision making.
- Learning will be mastery-based, allowing students to work at their own pace.
- There will be an emphasis on teaching the 'why' of learning and relevance to real life.
- The curriculum will feature project-based units that incorporate state standards and CTE concepts, developed by teachers and partners at other EAEI schools in the region.
- Technology will be used for tracking student mastery through Chromebooks and the LMS. Additionally, the school will also incorporate industry specific technology tools.

Weaknesses:

- Behavior expectations are stated generally through curriculum and a positive approach to learning yet is not specific when behavior expectations are not followed.
- No details were provided to indicate how administration would ensure that all required concepts are taught within units of study, or how data would be used to evaluate the alignment of Units.
- Data from 1 of 3 EAEI schools in the region was provided to demonstrate the success of the academic program however the application would be strengthened by including additional data across all programs to evaluate the success of the educational model.
- The application does not specifically address which school design elements are possible because of the flexibility afforded to charters.

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:**

- This section was thoroughly written and well understood by the evaluator.
- Scaffolding from surface understanding to that of deep understanding of a project that incorporates state standards was well developed in the text of the grant.
- Students knowing the why of a project was well explained.
- Teachers will use the SOLO teaching model and LiFT LMS to activate students' knowledge and connect them to deeper learning through stages of content acquisition.
- The phases of learning are designed to support at-risk learners.
- Instruction will be based around meaningful learning opportunities for students and be aligned to state and CTE academic standards and emphasize workforce readiness.
- Students will document their progress towards mastery standards through a virtual portfolio of their work within each unit of study.

Weaknesses:

- Not enough information about RTI or MTSS but other requirements of this section are fully built out. It does mention using Fridays for additional supports.
- Although the grant explains pieces of differentiation and mastery learning, it does not identify how intervention structures such as RTI and Multi-tiered Systems of Supports are utilized from a collaborative staff perspective.
- The application describes a multi-step learning process in which students progress from one to the next however it is unclear which data is used to determine progression.
- Intervention processes are referenced however it is unclear what data will be used and how it will inform intervention systems.
- It is unclear how national or state normed assessments will be used to inform intervention systems.

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:**

- A well rounded set of assessments will be utilized (i.e., other schools in the EAEI Network for student achievement result comparisons as well as norm referenced and project based standards).
- Benchmarking with summative and formative assessments will be utilized for continuous improvement.
- The school will utilize Renaissance Learning Star Math and Reading assessments as benchmark measures. These assessments will be reviewed regularly by staff at the school and the network to help inform policy and management decisions.
- Formative, interim, and summative assessment data will be contained in the LMS for teachers to access.

Weaknesses:

- It is unclear how benchmark assessments will inform instruction or differentiation.
- The application identified that the school will measure student satisfaction, graduation rates and certification passage rates, credit completion, and students on track for graduation however it is unclear which tools will be used or how often this information will be tracked.

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:**

- The school has the support of local officials and the local school district.
- Based on their other schools it seems that enrollment will not be an issue.
- There is strong community support as evidenced by the school district being EAEI's chartering district, legislature support and the support of community businesses and organizations.
- Many community members visited a partner school in Caldwell and were so impressed they wanted the same sort of school for their area.
- Parents will become involved in volunteering opportunities.
- The school has received local political support from the mayor and city offices, as well as referral agreements with local district middle schools.
- The future school leader plans to build additional relationships with local district leadership, as well.
- Other EAEI schools in the state have healthy enrollment and waitlists.

Weaknesses:

- Are there opportunities for parents to be involved beyond the volunteering stage?
- Minimal information about parent involvement is included in the application.

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:**

- The school is committed to Child Find practices, using all special education state requirements and serving all students.
- The application identifies that food service will be provided.
- The applicant plans to contract with a transportation company, or operate their own services, to ensure that transportation is not a barrier to school attendance as well as to allow for frequent community and workplace access.

Weaknesses:

- Not clear if the school will contract out transportation or do it themselves (both were mentioned) but either way they will provide transportation.
- Proactive behavior strategies are mentioned, yet there is little evidence how behavioral issues will be dealt with and who is responsible for dealing with particular behaviors.
- Bussing is provided but no evidence of providing such services for foster or homeless students.
- Little evidence of communication between special education teacher and classroom teachers in providing the least instructive environment for students.
- The application identifies the design elements that will support students who are at-risk but does not identify specific curriculum or instructional strategies that will support students in special education, those who are English Language learners, or other subgroups of students.
- The application includes requirements from the Idaho Special Education manual but does not describe how these processes and systems will be integrated into the design of the school and implemented.
- Information about a comprehensive behavior system was not included in the application.

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:**

- The new school has the distinct advantage of utilizing existing PD materials and trained staff.
- New teachers also may visit the current schools to see the model in action.
- There is evidence of robust professional development opportunities.
- Lead teachers are given leadership roles in order to facilitate PD for their team.
- Professional Development is also provided through the Network as well as opportunities to tap into other means of PD – all aligned to the vision and mission of the school.
- The school will leverage the expertise of the leaders within the Elevate Network to provide professional development in the areas of the school's core values.
- Teachers will participate in Professional Learning Communities as part of their ongoing development.
- The school will utilize a teacher evaluation system based on research-based practices for at-risk youth.

Weaknesses:

- No evidence of a staff recruitment plan.
- The application indicates that the school is prepared to implement training and coaching to support teacher development and growth however systems and structures to implement this process, as well as details regarding frequency were not provided.
- A plan to recruit high-quality educators was not provided.
- Additionally, retention plans were not included to ensure that the school maintains consistent, high quality staff.

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:**

- Facility costs are favorable to the location. The location of the school is near the boundary of two districts, allowing students easy access with and without bussing.
- The budget narrative aligns tightly with the grant budget goals.
- The budget narrative and grant budget align with the project goals included in the application and are geared towards adequate resources and supplies to address the needs of at-risk students.
- The proposed facility will be within walking distance to several communities and will be designed to accommodate several different CTE programs.

Weaknesses:

- The budget does not speak to key personnel in charge of ordering.
- Little evidence within the grant that speaks directly to a plan to mitigate risk associated with projected enrollment. There is some evidence this would not be an issue based on the enrollment and waiting lists of the two other Network schools.
- Key dates and personnel were not identified in the project goal plan.
- The school plans to locate directly adjacent to the district's alternative high school. Implications of this proximity were not addressed.
- The success of the school will rely on grants, donations, and partnerships with organizations however evidence of committed partnerships was not provided.

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:**

- The school has thoroughly vetted board members who hold a variety of skillsets and is committed to maintaining a board that reflects the local community.
- Board member makeup encompasses a diverse set of skills.
- The board of directors membership represents a diverse skill set with varied levels of experience in governance and within the Elevate Academy Network.
- A local advisory board will serve as an incubator for governing board members to ensure there is a pipeline of qualified members for years to come.
- Board members will participate in training through ISBA and examples of training were provided in the application.

Weaknesses:

- Little evidence of oversight in regard to the academic performance of students.
- The application indicates which activities the board is responsible for, however details on how these will be monitored are absent.
- The application would be strengthened by identifying who is responsible for coordinating board trainings and a schedule to ensure that appropriate training is completed in a timely manner.

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:**

- The Principal of the school has a varied and successful repertoire of experiences.
- The school leader is an experienced educator and leader in project-based learning and CTE, two core design concepts of the school.

Weaknesses:

- No evidence provided of possible key risk factors and developed strategies to navigate and mitigate them.
- The role of the school leader is clear however job responsibilities of the CEO and other network staff are not delineated.
- It is unclear how the CEO will be evaluated by the board of directors.
- Financial management was not addressed in the application.

Overall comments**Reviewer Comments**

- This newest Elevate campus has many advantages that will ensure the success of the school. The organization's proven track record, support from local and statewide officials, and a strong commitment to meet the workforce needs of the local business community make for a recipe of success.
- Providing a school such as EAEI that covers two districts will allow at risk students opportunities not available in the area.
- Success for such a school has a proven success rate as evidenced by Network schools.
- Students are provided a variety of classes and are held accountable to standards.
- The proposed grant goals and budget will support the school in addressing the needs of at-risk youth in a project-based educational environment.
- The school is a replication of other Elevate Academy schools in the area who appear to have strong enrollment demand.
- There are many opportunities for authentic community partnership through the Career and Technical Education program and students will leave with industry certifications that will allow them to be employed in their local community after graduation.
- There were few details provided to explain the role of the network CEO and staff, especially in regards to financial management and grant management.
- The application is generally vague regarding how it will support a variety of learners, implement academic and behavioral intervention systems, and ensure that teacher developed curriculum materials are rigorous.
- Sufficient details to demonstrate viable teacher recruitment, development, and support systems that ensure faculty are able to successfully implement the model were also absent.