



BUILDING ON SUCCESS

IDAHO'S CHARTER SCHOOLS PROGRAM GRANT



APPLICATION DETAILS

School Name: Fernwaters K-8	
Contact Person: Kristin Foss	Contact Email: kristinfoss@fernwaters.org
Application Type: Expansion	Grant Budget: \$ 247,500
Grades Served: K-8	New Seats Created: 64
Total Averaged Score: 96	Priority Points Assigned: 4
Application Status: Funded	

RUBRIC

<p>A. SMART Grant Project Goals <i>Identify 2-4 SMART 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.</i></p>	
TOTAL POINTS	10/10
<p>Reviewer Comments – Grant Project Goals</p> <p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 1 addresses expanding grade offerings and ensuring high educational standards, aligning with Idaho’s required performance criteria for K-3. • Goal 2 focuses on inclusivity and aims to meet demographic representation goals within 5% of local statistics. • Goal 3 sets clear, measurable objectives for literacy and ISAT proficiency, exceeding local and state averages. • Goal 4 promotes comprehensive education through enrichment activities and community partnerships, addressing diverse learning needs. • Each goal aligns with the school’s mission of providing a personalized and high-expectation learning environment. • The goals support the school’s vision of helping students achieve “BIG life dreams” through rigorous academics and strong community ties. • The measures and metrics are appropriately rigorous and trackable. • All 4 of Fernwaters project goals support the proposed school expansion of adding four grades, K-3. • Each of the 4 project goals align to the school's mission and are specifically defined, as well as measurable. • Goal #3 addresses Idaho's performance criteria for achievement and growth for each subject in grades 4-8, while goal #2 satisfies the requirement to serve a student population that is within 5% of local demographics. 	



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.

TOTAL POINTS

20/20

Reviewer Comments - Educational Philosophy, Instructional Practices, and Curriculum

Strengths:

- Key Design Elements:
 - Clearly articulated instructional methods and a well-defined school culture.
 - Practices complement curriculum decisions and design.
 - Supported by research-based best practices.
- Core Academic Curriculum:
 - Identifies key materials and justifies choices based on state and federal standards.
 - Detailed description of curriculum implementation and expected outcomes.
- Research and Data-Based Justification:
 - Correlates research with projected demographic needs.
 - Clear alignment between curriculum and pedagogy.
- Technology Utilization:
 - Detailed technology plan for instructional delivery and assessment.
 - Justified suitability for the educational model and student demographic.
- Utilization of Autonomies and Flexibilities:
 - Leverages charter-specific teacher certification to recruit suitable staff.
 - Creative use of resources and partnerships to enhance educational offerings.
- Fernwaters’ educational philosophy, instructional practices and curriculum are described in detail, including how each aligns to Idaho's Core Standards-based Curriculum.
- Rationale has been provided for the selection of curriculum and is substantiated by research-based educational philosophy, as well as best practices.
- Fernwaters partnership with community organizations to expand learning experiences provides a unique opportunity for their students to gain exposure to community leaders and become lifelong contributors to their small, rural community.



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.

TOTAL POINTS	6/6
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Reviewer Comments – Teaching and Learning

Strengths:

- Detailed, realistic instructional practices aligned with the educational program.
- Effective use of assessments to determine individual student needs.
- Comprehensive differentiation and intervention structures.
- Fernwaters uses a variety of instructional practices and tools to evaluate students success, including RTI, ISAT scores and MAP data.
- The school uses this data and information to help teachers differentiate classroom instruction, as well as identify areas for improving the instruction provided.

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.

TOTAL POINTS	9/9
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Reviewer Comments – Student Academic Achievement Standards

Strengths:

- Performance Management Plan:
 - Identifies sound assessment practices and data collection methods.
 - Clear interim benchmarks and adjustment plans.
- Data-Driven Instruction:
 - Portfolio of formative, interim, and summative assessments.
 - System for data analysis and reflection to inform instruction.
- The Data Administrator meets bimonthly with staff and administration to communicate results of analyzed student data, performance and test scores.
- Again, Fernwaters also uses RTI, ISAT scores and MAPS data, as well as Amplify as a reading screener and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt’s benchmark tests as a screener for math and reading achievement. This allows for the timely identification of weaknesses in student achievement, and in turn, the immediate implementation of targeted interventions when necessary.



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.

TOTAL POINTS	10/10
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Reviewer Comments – Student Demand and Community/Local Support

Strengths:

- Community Need and Demand:
 - Sound strategies for marketing and outreach.
 - Plans to recruit educationally disadvantaged and diverse families.
- Family and Community Engagement:
 - Effective parent and community engagement strategies.
 - Clear roles for parents and community members in school life.
- The expansion of Fernwaters to K-3 is clearly supported by the local community as evidenced in the Letters of Support included with their application documents, as well as their Authorizer approving the accelerated timeline for the expansion to serve grades K-8, from September 2026 to September 2024.

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.

TOTAL POINTS	9/12
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Reviewer Comments – Effectively Serving All Students

Strengths:

- Detailed plans for transportation needs.
- Fernwaters has partnerships with several local organizations to ensure all students needs are met from transportation, to physical and occupational therapy, as well as homelessness, food banks and churches.
- Students also benefit from being able to participate in extracurricular activities at the Salmon School District.

Weaknesses:

- Moderate documentation of academic and behavioral intervention strategies.
- Could have seen more evidence of knowing the needs for serving educationally disadvantaged.
- Would have liked to have seen more with regard to support strategies, trained staff, and the nutrition program.
- The school's food service plan was not clearly outlined. There should be a method for identifying students in need of lunch and a plan to ensure they are feed on a daily basis.



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.

TOTAL POINTS

4/4

Reviewer Comments – Staffing and Professional Development Plan

Strengths:

- Staffing Approach:
 - Feasible and sound recruitment and selection process.
 - Sufficient staffing structure to support the educational model.
- Staff Development and Retention:
 - Comprehensive professional development plan.
 - Regular evaluation and support for innovation.
- New teachers are assigned Mentors and follow a structured training plan that aligns with the Danielson Framework.

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.

TOTAL POINTS

4.5/7

Reviewer Comments – Financial Management and Monitoring Plan

Strengths:

- Operational and Financial Capability:
 - Documented plan with conservative financial assumptions.
 - Documented alignment of budget with project goals.
- Resources for Disadvantaged Students:
 - Sufficient resources and risk mitigation plans.
 - Investment in value-added activities for at-risk students.
- Salaries and Benefits are less than 65% of the school's annual budget.
- Facility costs are 20% of the budget in year 1 and continually decrease each year thereafter.
- Net Income continually increases year over year.

Weaknesses:

- Facilities Plan:
 - Would have like to have seen more detailed facilities planning.
 - Would have like to have seen more cost/benefit with facility planning courses of action.
- Total CSP Grant Sources on the Uses and Sources tab of the 3 Yr Budget document does not agree to the total SP expenses on the USDA Proforma tab.
- Total CSP requested dollar amount is not clearly specified.
- The Master Budget Sheet tab using incorrect PERSI employer contribution rates. That said, the projected increased rates over the next several years are minimal and can be easily absorbed in the existing proposed budget.
- Debt/Lease Coverage ratio is above the 1.2 goal.



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 development to maintain board strength going forward.

TOTAL POINTS	10.5/12
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Reviewer Comments – Board Capacity and Governance Structure

Strengths:

- Board Composition and Selection:
 - Adequate expertise and plans to address skill gaps.
 - Effective recruitment and training of board members.
- Policies and Procedures:
 - Comprehensive set of roles and responsibilities.
 - Effective compliance and performance monitoring.
- Board Development:
 - Prioritizes training and ongoing professional development.
 - Regular self-evaluations and improvement plans.
- The Fernwaters Board continues to rotate out founding members and continuously recruits new members. The rotation of board members helps to eliminate "aligned subgroups or factions" of board members.

Weaknesses:

- Completed Conflict of Interest Forms are not included in Fernwaters application.

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.

TOTAL POINTS	9/10
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Reviewer Comments – School Leadership and Management

Strengths:

- Leadership and Administrative Roles:
 - Complete organizational and management plan.
 - Comprehensive performance evaluation process for leadership.
- Leadership Capability:
 - Identifies operational challenges and response plans.
 - Demonstrates strategic and sound leadership.
- The school has a healthy fund balance, as evidenced in their annual audit.
- Fernwaters has created sound partnerships with community members and organizations, and is clearly supported by the parents of students, as well as the city of Salmon, all documented in their Letters of Support.



APPLICATION TOTAL POINTS		
Rubric Section	Points Awarded	Points Possible
A. Grant Project Goals	<u>10</u>	10
B. Educational Philosophy, Instructional Practices, and Curriculum	<u>20</u>	20
C. Teaching and Learning	<u>6</u>	6
D. Student Academic Achievement Standards	<u>9</u>	9
E. Student Demand and Community/Local Support	<u>10</u>	10
F. Effectively Serving All Students	<u>9</u>	12
G. Staffing and Professional Development Plan	<u>4</u>	4
H. Financial Management and Monitoring Plan	<u>4.5</u>	7
I. Board Capacity and Governance Structure	<u>10.5</u>	12
J. School Leadership and Management	<u>9</u>	10
STANDARD POINTS AWARDED	<u>92</u>	100
Priority Points: 2 Additional Points may be awarded for schools that articulate a plan to serve and intentionally meet the unique needs of students in rural geographic areas.	<u>2</u>	2
Priority Points: 2 Additional Points may be awarded for schools that provide a high-quality high school program.	<u>0</u>	2
Priority Points: 2 Additional Points may be awarded for schools that articulate a plan to serve and intentionally meet the unique needs of a student population of more than 50% economically disadvantaged students.	<u>0</u>	2
Priority Points: 2 Additional Points may be awarded for schools that serve a 100% at-risk student population.	<u>0</u>	2
Priority Points: 2 Additional Points for schools authorized by a public school district .	<u>2</u>	2
TOTAL POINTS AWARDED	<u>96</u>	110

