



BUILDING ON SUCCESS

IDAHO'S CHARTER SCHOOLS PROGRAM GRANT



APPLICATION DETAILS

School Name: Lava Hot Springs Academy	
Contact Person: Kolleen DeGraff	Contact Email: bkdegraff@msn.com
Application Type: Start Up	Grant Budget: \$1,200,000
Grades Served: K – 6	New Seats Created:
Total Averaged Score: 85	Priority Points Assigned: 4
Application Status: Funded after Capacity Review	

RUBRIC**A. SMART Grant Project Goals**

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.**

TOTAL POINTS**9/10****Reviewer Comments – Grant Project Goals****Strengths:**

- The grant project goals meet the specified requirements and are aligned to the mission of the school.

Weaknesses:

- Goal #1 does not provide detail or explanation of how the school will ensure the increased number of seats will actually be high-quality school seats. The goal merely speaks to tracking the enrollment through the school's SIS system and assumes each seat will be high-quality, without defining high-quality or the method of achieving high-quality.
- Enrollment counts included in Goal #1 do not agree with the counts in the CSP 3 year Project Plan, 4 year Budget Summary or the Enrollment spreadsheet.

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**13/20****Reviewer Comments - Educational Philosophy, Instructional Practices, and Curriculum****Strengths:**

- The application explains the intended experience for students and teachers in adequate detail and describes how technology will be incorporated into the instructional model.
- It also explains how its flexibilities as a charter school enable to chosen mastery-based approach.

Weaknesses:

- The application does not present published research or data from previous implementation to justify curricular choices.
- The educational philosophy and learning approach of LHSA is far reaching across numerous disciplines. From a mastery-based learning model, to individualized student learning plans, including a collaboration of the classical curriculum from Hillsdale College for Social Studies, makes it unlikely that staff will be able to effectively and efficiently learn and utilize all of these methods and strategies successfully in teaching students.
- The initial investment costs for both the mastery-based learning model and the classical curriculum are expensive, thus raising budget concerns.

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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**4/6****Reviewer Comments – Teaching and Learning****Strengths:**

- The application addresses all of the requirements in this section, though it does not draw a clear link between the chosen mastery-based education program and the practices described.
- Use and analysis of student achievement data in developing and adjusting learning plans will assist teachers in identifying learning areas students are struggling in and allow for targeted remediation.

Weaknesses:

- The practices described in the application appear similar to or the same as practices in other schools, so it is unclear how the mastery-based program provides a different experience for students or teachers in 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.

TOTAL POINTS**7.5/9****Reviewer Comments – Student Academic Achievement Standards****Strengths:**

- This is a strong and detailed section of the application, with ample information describing how school staff will use data to chart a path forward for student success and monitor progress. It is especially notable how the application describes the role of the board in data-driven decision making.
- Building strong school-home partnerships with students and parents / guardians prior to start of school enforces LHSA's commitment to student achievement and success.

Weaknesses:

- Managing and maintaining individualized learning plans for each student at the school could be overwhelming for staff. This could lead to certain general ed students receiving more attention and focus, unintentionally, based on the requirements outlined in their individualized learning plan than others.

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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**8.5/10****Reviewer Comments – Student Demand and Community/Local Support****Strengths:**

- The application presents adequate information describing community need and support and acknowledges the important role that public schools play within communities.
- It seems reasonable that the closure of a school would create a common need for a new alternative to be offered and that the student population could support the school.
- Community support and interest in LHSA is evidenced based on attendance at community information sessions and applications submitted prior to the 2025 spring lottery (98 applications for 90 seats)

Weaknesses:

- The narrative points out in Section F that 20 interested families will only enroll if transportation is available. Are any of these 20 families corresponding enrollment figures included in the 98 applications submitted to the school and if so, has the impact been calculated for those who might not actually show up if transportation is not available due to budget constraints?

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**11/12****Reviewer Comments – Effectively Serving All Students****Strengths:**

- Most of this section of the application is well-conceived, especially the transportation section which notes that some families have indicated a need for buses in order to enroll their child.

Weaknesses:

- The plan described in the application to provide meals to students is somewhat piecemeal and the school does not appear to be planning to provide free meals to students that need them.
- Lower than expected enrollment will have a direct effect on transportation which is a key concern among perspective families as indicated in the narrative. Based on the data collected from interest forms, there are 20 families who will only enroll if bussing is made available. Pending on where these families are located in the attendance area, this could result in long routes or additional costs in order to shorten the routes to reasonable travel times.
- Lower than expected enrollment will also have a negative budgetary impact, resulting in less overall funding, that could also effect transportation and the school's ability to effectively serve all students.

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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**3/4****Reviewer Comments – Staffing and Professional Development Plan****Strengths:**

- The application acknowledges the need for professional development in order to successfully implement a mastery-based program, and indicates that school leaders have learned from Lava Elementary's experience.
- The staffing plan and current staff seem sufficient to meet the needs of the school right now.

Weaknesses:

- The application notes that the school will follow Idaho's teacher pay scale but also indicates competitive compensation, so it is unclear whether the school intends to offer any compensation above what teachers in other buildings receive.
- As noted in the narrative, low enrollment could impact the school's ability to hire a sufficient amount of support staff due to budget constraints, resulting in the engagement of volunteers from the parent and community base. Training and retaining these folks could become frustrating to the staff, as well as costly, since they are volunteers and not paid personnel who would otherwise be held accountable.
- Professional development costs for the Hillsdale classical curriculum, as well as the mastery-based learning approach are both costly.
- It should be noted, professional development for the Hillsdale classical curriculum is not included in this section of the narrative.
- Mastering and effectively implementing multiple learning approaches may be difficult for LHSA 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.

TOTAL POINTS**4.5/7****Reviewer Comments – Financial Management and Monitoring Plan****Strengths:**

- All of the information provided with the application in regard to financial management appears sufficient.

Weaknesses:

- The budget summary (4 year projection, based on 65 students each year), project budget (3 year CSP spending plan – based on enrollment year 1 of 90), and enrollment summary (enrollment year 1 of 93 and capacity of 182) spreadsheets do not align with one another and I am unable to reconcile them.
- The budget narrative does not provide an explanation of these discrepancies and in fact, indicates full enrollment of 225, which again does not align to any of the other documents previously mentioned.
- Concerns were also noted with the student counts used in calculating purchases of curriculum and technology supplies. For example, 90 Chromebooks will be purchased year 1, and then 15 additional each subsequent year, however, these amounts will be less than the student counts per the enrollment summary.
- There is no mention of a contingency plan for facilities funding of \$75,000/year over each of the next 2 years if the local May levy does not pass.

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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****Reviewer Comments – Board Capacity and Governance Structure****Strengths:**

- The application contains ample detail of the board selection process, expectations, and training. It contains all the necessary detail regarding the board's role and policy review.
- The Board has strong ties to the community, as evidenced through their residency and local business ownership(s).
- 2 members of the Board were instrumental in establishing LHSA. Their service as board members demonstrates their continued commitment to the school, as well as the community.

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**10/10****Reviewer Comments – School Leadership and Management****Strengths:**

- The school appears staffed with strong and competent leaders who will work hard to bring high quality education to the school and community.
- The school's Director has a proven track record as a School Administrator with over 22 years of experience at a successful private school in Utah.

Overall comments**Reviewer Comments**

- LHSA clearly has a sound plan and past experience from schools in the community to draw from and improve upon.
- The need for the school in the community is clear and implementing what by many accounts is a challenging model in the mastery-based program is commendable.
- The school has a strong leader who is no doubt committed to serving the community to the best of her ability.
- The application could do more to explain how the mastery model will be implemented beyond mixed age classrooms, formative assessments, and supportive PD. While these are important of course, the detail in the application is not always sufficient in describing how the student experience will be different from that of a student in another school. It also could do more to explain how the chosen curriculum supports a mastery-based program specifically.



APPLICATION TOTAL POINTS		
Rubric Section	Points Awarded	Points Possible
A. Grant Project Goals	<u>9</u>	10
B. Educational Philosophy, Instructional Practices, and Curriculum	<u>13</u>	20
C. Teaching and Learning	<u>4</u>	6
D. Student Academic Achievement Standards	<u>7.5</u>	9
E. Student Demand and Community/Local Support	<u>8.5</u>	10
F. Effectively Serving All Students	<u>11</u>	12
G. Staffing and Professional Development Plan	<u>3</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>10</u>	10
STANDARD POINTS AWARDED	<u>81</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>85</u>	110

Please note that a capacity review was conducted and with additional conditions, this grant was awarded. There are additional monitoring tasks that will need to be completed as a result of this review.

