

New Mexico Public

2021 New Charter  
Part D. Capacity



Education Commission

School Application Kit  
Interview Questions



**Scoring** – All responses will be scored using the following rubric:

<p><b>Meets the Criteria</b></p> <p><b>(M)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The applicant’s response completely addresses the question posed</li><li>• The applicant’s response aligns with and enhances the related information presented in the written application</li><li>• The applicant understands the information in the written application and the work that will be necessary to successfully implement the proposal</li></ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The applicant demonstrates the ability to appropriately respond to contingencies and challenges that will be faced when implementing the proposal</li> <li>● The applicant demonstrates a strong capacity to successfully operate a high-quality, effective school by implementing the proposal in the written application</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Approaches the Criteria  (A)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The applicant’s response does not meet all of the criteria required to be evaluated “Meets the Criteria”</li> <li>● The applicant’s response addresses the question posed, but may not do so fully</li> <li>● The applicant’s response mostly aligns with the related information presented in the written application</li> <li>● The applicant partially understands the work that will be necessary to successfully implement the proposal in the written application</li> <li>● The applicant demonstrates limited capacity to appropriately respond to contingencies and challenges that will be faced when implementing the proposal</li> <li>● The applicant demonstrates some capacity to operate a functional school by implementing the proposal in the written application</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Falls Far Below the Criteria  (F)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The applicant’s response does not meet all of the criteria required to be evaluated “Approaches the Criteria”</li> <li>● The applicant’s response does not address the question posed</li> <li>● The applicant’s response does not align with the related information presented in the written application</li> <li>● The applicant does not understand the work that will be necessary to successfully implement the proposal in the written application</li> <li>● The applicant demonstrates no capacity to respond to contingencies and challenges that will be faced when implementing the proposal</li> <li>● The applicant does not demonstrate the capacity to operate a functional school by implementing the proposal in the written application</li> </ul>

Capacity Interview Questions	
<b>Educational Plan: Mission</b>	1. How is the mission, as described in the application, essential to the success of the proposed school?
<b>Score</b>	<b>Review Team Comments:</b>
<b>Meets</b>	The mission navigates the strategic plan and development of the school. First school of its kind that is both academically rigorous in both arts and core content. The applicant team stated that the mission will be the north star of the school and will navigate the how and why of the school. The team discussed how the arts will work with their program, that ESSA has art as a core content so their education will be complete with the arts.
<b>Educational Plan: Innovation</b>	2. What is the most important contribution your proposed school will bring to public education in the community in which you propose to operate? How will this contribution be essential to the success of the proposed school?
<b>Score</b>	<b>Review Team Comments:</b>
<b>Meets</b>	The applicant team stated they have a clear understanding of the needs of their intended community. They will provide new and innovative learning opportunities and will work collaboratively. RioGAFA stated that their research based arts integrative model will provide opportunities for higher retention of information and learning. The school will supply food, supplies and transportation so that all students will have access to these items. RioGAFA made clear that student choice and investment will be the driving force behind how they will engage their students and community. They are also committed to providing breakfast, lunch, and snacks to students, as well as transportation to ensure an equitable arts education to students living on the westside of Albuquerque.
<b>Educational Plan: Mission Implementation</b>	3. How will you evaluate whether your mission and implementation of it are working?
<b>Score</b>	<b>Review Team Comments:</b>
<b>Meets</b>	The applicant team stated they will create a strategic plan with scope and sequence. It will be reviewed weekly during the planning year. They will create a rubric which will contain mission aligned goals and formative assessments will be on-going. Teacher evaluations and surveys will be given to stakeholders. Annual directives will be given by, and annually evaluated by, the governing board.

<b>Leadership &amp; Governance</b>	4. What role does a governing body play in the success of a charter school? Describe your strategic process for identifying and selecting members. How will this process support the success of your proposed school?
<b>Score</b>	<b>Review Team Comments:</b>
<b>Meets</b>	GB will assist in the success of the school. The identification and selection of board members will be completed by the founding board by creating a governance committee. The applicant team stated that the governing board will act with integrity and is committed to fulfilling obligations, such as attending meetings, making tough decisions, as well as not being afraid to ask the hard questions and in turn, make hard decisions. They will be a community of professionals and will be trained to properly perform their intended roles.
<b>Leadership &amp; Governance</b>	5. What role does the school leader play in the success of a charter school? Describe your strategic process for identifying and selecting her/him. How will this process support the success of your proposed school?
<b>Score</b>	<b>Review Team Comments:</b>
<b>Meets</b>	According to RioGAFA, their co-director model is what will help ensure the school's success. Their model will focus on maximizing the strengths of each person; they will collaborate in decision making which will encourage a shared leadership model throughout the school. RioGAFA has also clearly delineated roles for their co-director model as one will focus on academics, while the other focuses on operations.
<b>Leadership &amp; Governance</b>	6. How does a high quality process to evaluate the effectiveness of the governing body and the school contribute to the success of a charter school? Describe your strategic process for conducting these evaluations. How will these processes support the success of your proposed school?
<b>Score</b>	<b>Review Team Comments:</b>
<b>Meets</b>	The applicant team stated the governing board will reflect on the progress of the mission and vision of the school. Governing board members will be trained to have a basic understanding of educational law. The board will also assure that the budget aligns to the mission/vision. While RioGAFA does have a high quality process that seeks to incorporate input outside of just the governing body, they do need to strongly consider consistently incorporating all staff input into their evaluation process so that they get a clear understanding of the climate of the school from all perspectives.
<b>Leadership &amp; Governance</b>	7. Please explain the delineated roles and responsibilities of, and the relationships between, the founders, the governing body, and the proposed school's administration during the transitional period between the planning/implementation year and the first year of operations. Describe how those relationships evolve to ensure the success of the charter school.
<b>Score</b>	<b>Review Team Comments:</b>

<b>Meets</b>	<p>The governing body will have interest in the success of the school, which will ensure they are selecting effective directors for the school. There will be specific oversight in selection and oversight of school leaders, monitoring of school programs, as well as financial oversight. The board will also be involved in reviewing mission and vision, academic data, legal compliance and financial compliance, all of which will be reviewed on a monthly basis. community stakeholders will provide support and oversight. All committees have been identified. Furthermore, the governing board will create board job descriptions and will be responsible for oversight and accountability. They reiterated that two board members will have knowledge in educational law and two will have knowledge in educational finance. They will develop long-term goals which will be evaluated on an annual basis. The founding team and initial governing board will receive training within 90 days of onboarding, and the governing board will start with at least seven members.</p>
<b>Leadership &amp; Governance</b>	<p>8. Explain the importance of by-laws and policies to the success of a charter school. Describe the strategic processes the proposed school will use to establish and implement them and how these will contribute to the success of the proposed school.</p>
<b>Score</b>	<p><b>Review Team Comments:</b></p>
<b>Meets</b>	<p>The applicant team stated that creating strong bylaws supports the vision and mission of the school and provides vital components to creating equitable processes and systems for the school. Strong bylaws will also act as an integrity model for the GC to follow. The school has contracted with Kelly Callahan to help develop their bylaws. Policies and procedures will be developed for the school, personnel, and student handbooks. Policies and procedures will also be reviewed and voted on annually. RioGAFA will also create a handbook for the governing board and the co-directors; in addition, part of the staff onboarding process will include review of the staff handbook, and new teachers will be given a mentor.</p>
<b>Leadership &amp; Governance</b>	<p>9. How will the proposed school ensure that policies and procedures are not only compliant, but also well implemented, current, and effective? How will the proposed school determine when they are in need of change and how will it react?</p>
<b>Score</b>	<p><b>Review Team Comments:</b></p>
<b>Meets</b>	<p>The applicant team stated that they have worked with Kelly Callahan with Public Charter Schools of NM to help develop their by-laws and that the policies and procedures will follow the same protocol. There will be a monthly review of reports to assure the policy and procedures are working.</p>

<b>Facility</b>	10. Describe your plan for acquiring a facility and ensuring that the facility meets educational occupancy standards required by applicable New Mexico construction codes and the weighted New Mexico Condition Index. Whose responsibility will it be to carry out this major piece of opening a charter school? Please include details about locating, securing, and funding the facility.
<b>Score</b>	<b>Review Team Comments:</b>
<b>Meets</b>	The applicant team stated that the co-directors and the finance team will be charged with identifying the location of a facility. They have already identified 3 possible locations. Rep. Moe Maestas will help them find resources for the facility. They will also have involvement from the PSFA, as well as the fire marshal. The governing board will vote on the facility. They will look at financing the facility by using operating funds/CSP Grant. The budget will be created by their school business firm (K-12).
<b>Facility</b>	11. If you cannot find a building that meets the need of the plan described in the PSFA (Public School Facilities Authority) approval, what is your next steps plan?
<b>Score</b>	<b>Review Team Comments:</b>
<b>Meets</b>	The applicant team stated they will reach out to the PSFA for assistance by way of a formal letter that will outline an 18-month facilities plan.
<b>Finance</b>	12. How are you going to open your proposed school without federal start-up funds? Does the proposed school have a plan to supplement its budget in some way? Does the proposed school have a plan to acquire funding necessary to accomplish planning/implementation year requirements (setting up a bank account, acquiring furniture, having software systems in place to interface with PED's OBMS system, etc.)?
<b>Score</b>	<b>Review Team Comments:</b>
<b>Meets</b>	K-12 accounting has helped RioGAFA create a myriad of alternative funding sources. The school will also work with PED and private grant organizations, as well as utilize pre-affirmed funds from community members. They will also look for furniture donations. They will work CES and NM ACES to utilize existing price agreement/contracts. They will speak weekly with K-12 on budget and cash-flow. The representative from K-12 stated that the company has team members who are knowledgeable in the 3 major software packages that charter schools use.

<b>Finance</b>	13. In detail describe how you will make enrollment projections to establish and submit your first budget to PED? How will you ensure these enrollment projections are reasonable and align closely to your actual 40 day count?
<b>Score</b>	<b>Review Team Comments:</b>
<b>Meets</b>	The applicant team was very confident that they will meet their projected enrollment numbers. They have already lowered their anticipated enrollment numbers for year one. Their goal is to receive 150% of needed applications and will have continuous enrollment. If a grade level does not meet it's enrollment projections they are prepared to increase the number of students in another grade level if it is feasible (room without having to increase teachers, etc). Both directors are also licensed teachers and are committed to teaching if enrollment numbers do not align with staffing.
<b>Finance</b>	14. Suppose your actual enrollment on the first day is 50% below your pre-opening "enrollments" and 70% below your projections used to submit your budget. What are the implications for your budget/business plan and what are your next steps? Describe in detail what actions you would take and when you would take them to address this situation.
<b>Score</b>	<b>Review Team Comments:</b>
<b>Meets</b>	The applicant team reiterated what they stated in their application regarding meeting enrollment. They feel their SEG revenue was calculated conservatively by not including funds available in the first year only (increased TCI from their district, last year of the small school size adjustment). They will delay staff start dates and delay hiring until a teacher is needed in a grade level. However, it is unacceptable for RioGafa to consider asking to defer vendor payments as a method for helping to balance their budget should enrollment issues arise. This approach would be sure to trigger audit findings.
<b>Planning Year</b>	15. Describe the organizational steps the proposed school will take during the planning year to be ready for opening?
<b>Score</b>	<b>Review Team Comments:</b>
<b>Meets</b>	The applicant team stated that, pending approval, they will create their 1-3-5 year master plan, master calendar, assemble an equity council. Hiring will be based on budget. They also intend to immediately work on their CSP grant application. The founding board will become their governing board and will adopt their by-laws and conflict of interest policy. They will complete any conditions the PEC has given them during the authorization process. The Director of operations will manage and oversee school function, accounting, and advertising.

<b>Review Team's Individualized Questions</b>	16. Academic Framework: C1: 1. What is the planning and alignment model for instruction and assessment? 2. Will there be breaks for students during the extended day model? 3. Will there be academic writing incorporated into the creative writing curriculum for 9th-grade? 4. How will 9th-grade ELA align with NMCS instructional scope standards?
<b>Score</b>	<b>Review Team Comments:</b>
<b>Approaches</b>	RioGAFA will use a backward design (start with assessment and specific standards) model for instruction framework. RioGAFA needs to provide more clarity about the structure of the afternoon (artistry blocks) and structured playtime. If RioGAFA intends to count the artistry blocks as instructional time, it is unclear as to whether this will impact instructional hours if licensed teachers are not leading these classes.
<b>Review Team's Individualized Questions</b>	17. Academic Framework: E1: 1. What happens if a student does not have a 3.0 GPA at the end of semester 7? 2. Have you started to create partnerships with local colleges needed for students to take dual credit courses to satisfy fine arts requirements? 3. How will you handle transfer students in terms of their inevitable credit recovery? 4. Can you ensure enough offerings if you cannot find staff to teach all of the proposed course offerings courses listed in figure 18? 5. Have you researched post-secondary pathways/career clusters available to students in order for them to achieve certification? 6. What dual credit programs are available at CNM or UNM that offer certifications in some of the artistry students are going to practice? I see this as a good addition to your senior showcase. 7. How will you utilize multiculturalism to increase graduation rates as stated in your mission/vision? 8. Will the Senior Showcase suffice as a demonstration of competency?
<b>Score</b>	<b>Review Team Comments:</b>
<b>Meets</b>	RioGAFA has created partnerships of support with UNM, CNM, and Highlands for dual credit, student teachers, and student mentors. In their interview, RioGAFA shone in conveying how their SEL model will work to create a "wrap around method" that will help retain current students and nurture incoming students. However, they need to clarify the specifics of their credit recovery model. While they do have two pathways for earning a degree, they did not make clear how they will work with incoming future students in credit recovery to ensure ontime graduation.
<b>Review Team's Individualized Questions</b>	18. Academic Framework: G.1.B: What are the qualifications held and capacity of the director of academics to oversee the special education program?
<b>Score</b>	<b>Review Team Comments:</b>



<b>Approaches</b>	RioGAFA has an ambiguous plan for special education services. However, due to the magnitude and importance of having a robust and compliant special education plan, RioGAFA needs to identify a specific consultant to help oversee/get their program off the ground in years 1-3 until they are able to hire a head of special education in year
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<b>Review Team's Individualized Questions</b>	19. Academic Framework: H2: 1. In a formative sense, how will you use data obtained during performances and showcases to inform corrective actions if the school falls short of achieving mastery/proficiency of content areas? 2. How will you use the experts in and of your community to inform how you assess student growth?
<b>Score</b>	<b>Review Team Comments:</b>
<b>Meets</b>	Robust instructional coaching to include weekly data meetings, exit tickets in order to be proactive in terms of student mastery. RioGAFA's combination of weekly data meetings and the significant amount of prep time allotted to teachers will help staff ensure that students are being guided to a mastery level. Mastery based assessment rubrics have yet to be created but have been extensively researched. Their use of the "Just in time" is a strong example of an intervention tool that will help to ensure that students don't fall through the cracks. RioGAFA has carved out time during professional development sessions to train staff on how to effectively embed this reflective process into their instructional model. However, RioGAFA needs to make more clear how community experts brought into the school will be utilized to assess student growth.
<b>Review Team's Individualized Questions</b>	20. Organizational Framework: A1: 1. What is your proposed timeline for filling vacant board spots? 2. Can you explain your rationale for rotating board seats on an annual basis? 3. How will you ensure that at least two board members will always have finance and educational law expertise?
<b>Score</b>	<b>Review Team Comments:</b>
<b>Meets</b>	The applicant team stated that they will have a fully staffed board within 90 days and that they only have one spot to fill. They also clarified that the rotation of seats relates to officer position and not board members. The applicant team clarified that their intent is not to specifically recruit business managers or lawyers as board members but to recruit board members who have knowledge in the areas of educational finance and educational law. The team also stated that filling a board seat within 45 days of vacancy was not found in statute. However, it's important to note that the charter schools division and the PEC will hold them to this timeline.

<b>Review Team's Individualized Questions</b>	21. Organizational Framework: A3: What is your plan to ensure a continuous pool of highly qualified applicants?
<b>Score</b>	<b>Review Team Comments:</b>
<b>Meets</b>	The applicant team stated that board members will build on-going relationships with persons interested in the school and will keep a list of candidates. RioGAFA reiterated that it is the responsibility of board members to commit themselves to creating relationships and creating connections to help ensure that the needs of the board are being met so that they can effectively oversee the operation of the charter school.
<b>Review Team's Individualized Questions</b>	22. Organizational Framework: C3: How will the board guide the co directors in their individual responsibilities so that there will not be an atmosphere of "that's not my job, it's the their's" or "this is my job and not theirs" if a circumstance arises that is not in either Director's job description?
<b>Score</b>	<b>Review Team Comments:</b>
<b>Meets</b>	The applicant team felt that the delineated job descriptions of both positions were robust enough to remediate any ambiguity in job descriptions. When pressed during the interview, a founding board member stated that it was not their job to micromanage the co-directors. However, it is important to note that in a co-director model, the governing board must be willing to step in if conflict should ever arise that constitutes mediation.
<b>Review Team's Individualized Questions</b>	23. Organizational Framework: D3: How will you cover costs for the role reflected in the narrative (i.e. stars coordinator, academic coaches, etc)?
<b>Score</b>	<b>Review Team Comments:</b>
<b>Approaches</b>	It is concerning that RioGAFA has not properly budgeted for these roles at this time. If RioGAFA does not budget for these roles properly, this could result in future audit findings. The justification for this is the UCOA Supplement 3 guidance.
	24. Financial Framework: B4: Since rolling over funds from a previous year is not an option, how will RioGAFA pay for unforeseen budget shortfalls? 2. Where would proposed additional funding come from for your initial start up year?
<b>Score</b>	<b>Review Team Comments:</b>
<b>Meets</b>	RioGAFA made clear that they understand that their cash balance will be used and that they are aware that they can roll over funds in the initial year.