

New Mexico Public Education Commission



2023 New Charter School Application Kit

Part A

Introduction, Instructions & Evaluation Rubric

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Introduction

The *New Mexico Charter School Application Kit* was developed to provide guidance in the writing and review of new charter school submissions. The target audience for this document is both the founding group (the applicant team), as they develop a charter school application, and the Authorizer—the Public Education Commission (PEC), Authorizer’s designee(s), or Authorizer’s legal counsel (collectively referred to as “Authorizer”), as they review and evaluate the quality and completeness of the application.

The New Mexico Charter Schools Act provides the following policy statement:

The Charter Schools Act is enacted to enable individual schools to structure their educational curriculum to encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods that are based on reliable research and effective practices or have been replicated successfully in schools with diverse characteristics; to allow the development of different and innovative forms of measuring student learning and achievement; to address the needs of all students, including those determined to be at risk; to create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site; to improve student achievement; to provide parents and students with an educational alternative to create new, innovative and more flexible ways of educating children within the public school system; to encourage parental and community involvement in the public school system; to develop and use site-based budgeting; and to hold charter schools accountable for meeting the department's educational standards and fiscal requirements. (22-8B-3 NMSA 1978 *et seq.*).

Starting a new charter school in New Mexico requires proposals from committed individuals who have the capacity to achieve strong, educational outcomes. Through charter schools, the PEC, as Authorizer, and the Charter Schools Division (CSD) in the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) seek to provide families with effective, quality educational options. The PEC makes the final determination regarding the application after reading the application, hearing from the applicants and the local community, and considering the information provided by the peer review team and the CSD.

Overview of the Review Process

Each year, the PEC approves and makes available, in writing at its office and on its website, a new charter school application kit for a specified fiscal year. The PEC-approved application kit for a new charter for the current application cycle includes templates and attachments approved by the PEC.

Technical Review—CSD staff will confirm whether the applicant team has met all requirements and whether the application kit contains all components required by statute, rule, and application instructions. An application kit will pass the technical review if:

1. The applicant team timely submitted a Notice of Intent no later than the second Tuesday of January of the year in which an application will be filed, to the PEC and the district in which the proposed school will be located;
2. The application kit contains complete information for each application component, including an Executive Summary, all completed narrative sections, and all required exhibits, attachments, appendices, including the 910B5 SEG worksheet and a five-year Budget Plan.

Failure to meet the criteria above will result in the application being deemed incomplete. The application will be evaluated based on the information that is included when it is submitted.

Templates and attachments must not be altered from the approved content, format, and sequence. An application kit submitted for a new charter will be deemed incomplete if it contains modifications to the content, format, or sequence of the application, templates, or attachments or if it contains templates or attachments that were approved for use in a prior fiscal year.

Applicants will receive written notification of the deficiencies not more than five business days after the submission of the application kit. If the application is deemed incomplete, the Applicant's file will be closed. The applicant team may, within five business days of receiving the notice of an incomplete application, request a review by the PEC at its next regularly scheduled meeting. No new information and no additional submissions will be accepted or reviewed by the PEC or CSD.

Review—Applications will be evaluated and rated using the Evaluation Rubric, which is included in this document, Part A. An external peer review team will review each application. The review team consists of New Mexico Charter School experts who are overseen by the CSD. Each peer review team member will review each new charter application kit independently and thoroughly. Once complete, the peer review team will come together to discuss the application package and provide a consensus score, reasoning, and analysis. This preliminary analysis will be provided to the applicant team and the PEC. The CSD has the ability to review scores for uniformity between applications assessed at the same time and review teams reviewing applications at the same time.

Capacity Interview—The peer review team will interview the applicant team. The questions are designed to determine the applicant team's capacity to implement the charter school proposed in the application and to provide an opportunity for the applicant team to clarify any weaknesses identified in the application preliminary review. The Application rating and analysis, along with a rating and analysis of the Capacity Interview, will form the basis for the CSD's analysis to the PEC. (See Part D below.)

Community Input Hearing—The PEC holds a public hearing at which the applicant team has an opportunity to answer the PEC's questions. During the hearing, the PEC also has a chance to hear from the community and to learn about the positives and negatives for potentially opening a school like the one proposed (NMSA 22-8B-6(K)). The PEC will ask the applicants to respond to questions on the application during the Community Input Hearing. The applicant team may have the personnel with the technical expertise at the hearing (and should have experts present who were involved in completing the application kit). However, all applicant team members should demonstrate knowledge and understanding in all areas of the application.

CSD Analysis—The CSD utilizes information from the external peer review team consensus rating analysis, and capacity interview, along with analysis of the community input hearing to prepare materials for the PEC. The analysis is presented to the applicants and PEC at least two weeks prior to the August PEC meeting.

PEC Consideration—The PEC will read and evaluate all applications and make the final decision to deny, approve, or approve with conditions each application. The PEC reads and evaluates all applications. The PEC's decision is based on, but not limited to the following:

1. complete application submitted by applicant team;
2. external peer review team analysis;
3. capacity interview and the peer review team final scoring Evaluation Rubric and analysis;
4. community input hearing;
5. CSD analysis;

6. all clarifying information and statements provided by announced deadlines; and applicants' statements at the PEC July meeting.

Please contact the Charter Schools Division at charter.schools@ped.nm.gov or (505) 827-6909 with any questions regarding this process.

The New Charter School Application Kit

The New Charter School Application Kit contains four main parts, plus appendices. All parts of the kit comply with the amended Charter School Act, which requires charter schools' performance to be measured according to a framework of specific criteria. The application itself is organized by the framework.

Part A, the Introduction, Instructions and Evaluation Rubric provides applicant teams with information regarding instructions, application timelines, contact information, an application glossary of terms, logistical information, and the Evaluation Rubric. The overall ability of the applicant team to create a clear, cohesive, comprehensive, reasonable, and innovative charter school application depends in large part on following the instructions and Evaluation Rubric in Part A.

Part B, the Executive Summary requires the applicant to provide an overview of the proposed school. This offers the reviewers a general understanding of what is described in detail in the application. This summary will be posted on the CSD website so that the public knows who is applying for a state-funded public charter school. This section is not evaluated for points. However, the summary should adequately reflect what is found in the rest of the application. It will be submitted along with Part C between May 1 and June 1 at 5:00 PM Mountain Time of the current year.

Part C, the Written Responses requests information from the applicant team that should be responded to completely. The Evaluation Rubric should guide the applicant team's responses. It is important not to compartmentalize responses but to use the prompts to present a clear, comprehensive, cohesive, reasonable, and innovative educational, organizational, and financial framework for the proposed public charter school. The peer reviewers and CSD will be looking for a consistent narrative that presents evidence of a thorough and thoughtful plan, formulated by a capable team, deserving of being entrusted with millions of dollars of public funds, and which will offer a vibrant and innovative educational option for New Mexican children and their families. The proposed school's mission should be reflected throughout the Application in all proposed curriculum, programs, budgets, and resource allocations.

Note: Simply following the prompts does not guarantee approval by the PEC.

Part D, the Capacity Interview Questions and Rubric does not require any written information from the applicant team. Applicant teams will be asked approximately 15-20 questions that will allow them to showcase the applicant team's capacity to implement the framework for the charter school outlined in the application.

Appendices:

- A. Governing Body Bylaws
- B. Head Administrator Job Description
- C. Job Descriptions for Certified, Licensed, and Other Key Staff
- D. Proposed Agreements Governing Third Party Relationships and Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs) (required if applicable)
- E. PSFA-Approved Projected Facility Plan Documentation
- F. Five Years of 910B5 State Equalization Guarantee (SEG) Computation Revenue Estimates
- G. Five-year Budget Plan

H. Internal Control Procedures

Summary

Experience has shown that successful charter schools tend to have a number of common characteristics such as:

- A clear, focused, results-oriented, measurable mission statement that aligns to all parts of the proposal
- A demonstrated understanding of the charter school's projected students, based on the local community or the school district in whose geographic boundaries the charter school applies to operate
- An educational program that is likely to be effective for the school's projected students, based on the local community or the school district in whose geographic boundaries the charter school applies to operate
- Strong goals to assist the school in meeting its mission and educational programming in an equitable way
- Strong, experienced, and diverse leadership and governance that aligns the mission of the school with results-oriented, measurable practice
- A Governing Body that provides strong, professional functions in financial oversight, Board functions, and supporting the leadership of the school
- Strong financial planning and management
- A school that demonstrates support and ownership of the school by the local community, not just the applicant team

The PEC expects thoughtful, well-developed applications from capable school developers who are committed to enhancing education in New Mexico. All successful applicants shall: 1) enter into a planning/implementation year including required monthly meetings, 2) complete a planning/implementation year checklist, and 3) negotiate a contract with the PEC prior to receiving approval from the PEC to commence operations. The templates used in the negotiations are available on PED's website.

Instructions and Timeframe

Notice of Intent	The Notice of Intent (NOI) must be submitted no later than the second Tuesday in January, on the form provided, to both the Public Education Commission and the local district where the proposed charter school intends to be located.
Technical Assistance Workshops	New Application Training Workshops will be provided by the CSD between January and May. Applicant teams that submit a timely NOI will be notified of the details, dates, times, and locations for all trainings via email. The CSD website for information regarding the Technical Assistance Workshops is: https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/options-parents-families/charter-schools/trainings-offered/). To RSVP, send participant's name, school affiliation, position, and email address to charter.schools@ped.nm.gov .

PSFA Facilities Master Plan	Applications must include evidence that the Public-School Facilities Authority (PSFA) Master Plan has been completed. Form available on PSFA website, submitted to PSFA in April.
Deadline: Charter Application	Applications must be submitted by email to charter.schools@ped.nm.gov by June 1 by 5:00 PM Mountain Time.
Applications Provided to the PEC	All received applications will be transmitted to the PEC by June 8 after CSD checks for completeness
Substantive Review Period	An external peer review team of New Mexico charter school experts will read and analyze the applications in June. Each team is overseen by CSD staff.
Capacity Interviews	This interview, designed to demonstrate the applicant team’s capacity to implement the school as described in the application, will take place June 19-21.
Preliminary Analysis	The review team’s preliminary analysis of the application and capacity interview is provided to the applicant team and the PEC by June 30.
Community Input Hearings	The PEC will hold hearings July 10-12 to allow the local community, including the local school district, the opportunity to provide comments on the application. The PEC will also use this opportunity to obtain information from the applicants that may inform the commissioners.
Public Written Comments	Community input may include written or oral comments in favor of or in opposition to the application by members of the community and other interested individuals. Community input shall be provided between July 10 and 13.
CSD Analysis and Recommendation	The CSD will send its analysis by email to the PEC and to the applicant by July 14.
PEC Letter to Applicants	The PEC will inform applicants of their concerns by July 21.
PEC Decision- Making Meeting	The PEC will hold a public decision-making meeting on August 25 to a) approve, b) approve with conditions, or c) deny the Application. At this meeting, the applicants will have an additional opportunity, prior to the decision, to address the PEC and to answer questions from the PEC members.

Glossary of Terms Relevant to the Application

Alignment of Curriculum, Educational Program, Student Performance Standards: The curriculum of all public schools must be aligned with the New Mexico Common Core State Standards, Content Standards, Benchmarks, and Performance Standards. An alignment document—by subject and grade level—lists each of the performance standards, cross- referenced with the instructional materials, and a timeline for when they are addressed.

Assessment: A valid formative and summative reliable method(s), tool(s), or system(s) to evaluate and demonstrate progress toward—or mastery of—the academic and non-academic performance goals stated in the application.

Charter Schools Act: The Charter Schools Act, 22-8B-1 et. seq. NMSA 1978, allows the authorization of charter schools that are independent public schools. Charter Schools operate under charters granted for up to five years by the Public Education Commission (PEC) or local school districts, known as Authorizers. Once an Authorizer has awarded a charter, the new charter school organizes around the mission, curriculum, theme, and/or teaching method described in its application. Charter schools are allowed autonomy, including control of their own budget, hiring their own employees, and other functions that the charter school is required to perform in order to carry out the educational program described in its charter. A charter school, on an annual basis, must demonstrate academic improvement, fiscal responsibility, and sound organizational operations that comply with the law.

In 2011, the Legislature amended sections of the Charter Schools Act to add and modify accountability requirements for charter schools and Authorizers. By using a Performance Contract and accompanying Performance Framework, charter schools have specific material terms they must meet. In addition, they are assessed by the indicators contained in the Performance Frameworks. The categories evaluated in the Performance Framework are Academic, Financial, and Organizational indicators. If the school is approved, the Authorizer negotiates terms of the Performance Contract, including mission-specific goals, with the charter school prior to the time that the school commences operations.

Instructional Hours: Hours in which regular students are in school-directed instructional programs, exclusive of lunch and breaks. This should include an example of a daily schedule in which the instructional hours will be fulfilled in order to visualize a typical day for students and teachers.

Mission: The mission of the school is a concise statement that describes the purpose of the school and how the school will achieve it. The mission should answer questions, such as: 1) what outcomes for students does the school seek to accomplish; 2) how will it accomplish those outcomes; and 3) what is unique about the school? The best mission statements are clear, focused, compelling, and have a focus on outputs rather than inputs. The statement should be the driving force and rationale behind all the other components of the application. There should be indicators throughout the application that show how the school will actualize the intended mission.

Mission-Specific Goals: The Amended Charter Schools Act requires that new charter applications include: the goals, objectives and student performance outcomes to be achieved by the charter school as well as a description of the charter school's plan for evaluating student performance, the types of assessments that will be used to measure student progress toward achievement of the state's standards and the school's student performance outcomes, the timeline for achievement of the outcomes and the procedures for taking corrective action in the event that student performance falls below the standards. (NMSA 22-8B-8(B)). This application requirement prepares the applicant team for the Performance Framework contents, which will be negotiated with the PEC if the proposed charter application is approved. Specifically, the performance framework shall allow for the inclusion of additional rigorous, valid, and reliable indicators proposed by a charter school to augment external evaluations of its performance, provided that the chartering authority shall approve the quality and rigor of such proposed indicators and the indicators are consistent with the purposes of the Charter Schools Act (NMSA 22-8B-9.1(c)).

New Mexico Common Core State Standards, Content Standards, Benchmarks, and Performance Standards: The State of New Mexico has established the Content Standards with Benchmarks and Performance Standards to be used by all public schools, including charter schools, and state-supported

educational institutions to develop, deliver, and assess curriculum. New Mexico has adopted the Common Core State Standards. The NM Standards may be accessed at:

<https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/instructional-materials/new-mexico-content-standards/>

NM Standards: Refers to New Mexico Content Standards, Benchmarks, and Performance Standards

Partnership: A partner organization supports the implementation of the school’s mission. A “partnership” is a formal relationship rather than an informal or tangential agreement to provide ancillary support to particular school programs through the commitment of funds or other resources to support the school’s operation and long-term existence. According to Charter Law, a charter school is a public school that may contract with a school district or other party for provision of financial management, food services, transportation, facilities, education-related services, or other services. The governing body shall not contract with a for-profit entity for the management of the charter school (NMSA 22-8B-4R).

Plagiarism: The practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own will not be tolerated. Be sure to credit authors and cite sources for any references in the application.

Plan/Process: A plan, for purposes of this application, is a detailed statement of how an outcome will be achieved. A plan could include, as appropriate: clear expectations, criteria, actions steps, monitoring steps, timelines, benchmarks, onboarding procedures, and responsible parties.

Policy: A policy, for purposes of this application, is a guiding statement that reflects the principles, rules, or guidelines to be adopted by the school’s governing body once the charter contract is formally executed. Policy statements contain clear expectations, criteria, timelines, and responsible parties to be implemented on behalf of the governing body.

Procedure: A procedure, for purposes of this application, is a statement of the specific methods to be used or course of action that will be taken to implement a policy in the day-to-day operation of the school. A procedure identifies action steps, timelines, benchmarks, and responsible parties.

Remediation for students not achieving standards: Remediation, for purposes of this application, refers to a process, procedure, plan, or a variety of instructional support opportunities to assist individual students who are not achieving proficiency in the NM standards or other student performance expectations. There should be a detailed plan for how the school intends to provide a differentiated learning experience to support students in meeting their educational potential.

Scope and Sequence: A scope and sequence should include the following components:

- Grade levels, grade spans, age spans, or other sequence
- The knowledge, content standards/areas or organizing themes within the grade levels, grade spans, age spans, or other sequence.
- The time/number of lessons/etc. spent to address specific knowledge, content standards/areas or organizing themes.
- Sufficient coverage of all grade level content standards/areas required by the state.

SMART Goals: Mission-Specific Goals must be:

- **Specific.** A well-defined goal must be specific, clearly, and concisely stated, and easily understood. Educational goals should be tied to learning standards that specify what students should know and be able to do for each subject or content area and for each grade, age, or other grouping level.

- **Measurable.** A goal should be tied to measurable results to be achieved. Measurement is then simply an assessment of success or failure in achieving the goal.
- **Attainable.** A goal should be attainable and realistic.
- **Rigorous.** A goal should be challenging, based on current or expected performance.
- **Time-Specific with Target Dates.** A well-conceived goal should specify a timeframe or target date for achievement.

Special Populations: Special populations may include students who have been identified with special needs that require an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), a Section 504 Accommodations plan, English learner (EL) instruction, or those who require access to ancillary services including, but not limited to, health, speech/language services, social work services, physical therapy, occupational therapy, etc.

State and Federal Accountability System Academic Performance Indicator: The School Grading Accountability System is the first part of the academic framework that is used to evaluate all public schools, including charter schools, in the state of New Mexico. The NM System of School Support and Accountability Report includes criteria components such as Math and Reading Proficiency, Student Growth, English Learner Process, Science Proficiency, Chronic Absenteeism, Educational Climate, Graduation Rates, and College and Career Readiness (the latter two being appropriate for high school only). Understanding the State Accountability System is critical in the development of your school, as it is a major component of your school’s annual evaluation.

Unique: Unique, for the purposes of this application, describes specific methods that are different and innovative, based on reliable research, effective practices, or demonstrably successful in schools with diverse characteristics, not currently available to students in the proposed geographic area. Compare and contrast with educational programs of other public schools that serve the same grade levels in that area.

Evaluation Rubric for Part C: Application

Rating: Along with each prompt, the application identifies the elements that must be present for a response to be evaluated as “Meets the Criteria.” The following rubrics govern general rating practices. Please be sure that each response also completely addresses the bulleted points in the rubrics for each individual prompt.

<p>Meets the Criteria</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All required elements present ● Sufficient detail present, enabling the proposal to be implemented without requiring further proposal development ● The proposal is reasonable and realistic ● Fully consistent with other sections, including budget and mission ● Fully consistent with all requirements of law ● Coherent and easily understood
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<p>Approaches the Criteria</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The majority of required elements are present, but not all ● Insufficient detail; further proposal development will be required before the applicant can begin to implement the concept ● Minor inconsistencies with other sections of the application ● May raise questions about legal compliance, but does not demonstrate non-compliance ● May raise questions about reasonableness or viability of the proposal
<p>Does Not Meet the Criteria</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● None or less than a majority of the required elements are present ● Contradicts or is substantially inconsistent with other sections ● Insufficient detail to understand the proposal, which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Copying responses from a prior applicant’s application ○ Copying statutory, regulatory, or policy/guidance language ○ Plagiarizing information from other publicly available material ● Includes statements that violate or conflict with the requirements of law ● Incoherent or confusing ● The proposal is patently unreasonable or unrealistic

ACADEMIC FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS
<p>The mission of proposed school Explore Academy - Santa Fe (EA-SFE) is to provide all students, regardless of background, with a personalized educational experience through the power of student choice, allowing each student to create a personalized and engaging educational pathway in preparation for college and career.</p> <p>The methods that EA-SFE will use to achieve this mission are short, themed, standards-based, seminar classes that students may choose every 20 days from a course catalog. For every set of required standards, students can choose from among several “flavors” or themes through which they will learn the standards.</p> <p>EA-SFE is proposed as a K-12 school and, if approved, would be the only public K-12 school in Santa Fe.</p> <p>Overall, the proposed school has a strong academic framework with its Mission, Vision, Mission-Specific Goals, Curriculum, Black, Hispanic, Multicultural and Bilingual and Indian Education Act, Instructional Philosophy, Schedule Narrative, Special Education plan and monitoring, ELL plan, ESSA and Special Population Needs, Assessment Data Analysis, and Achievement Communication Plan all meeting the criteria for success.</p> <p>The proposed school’s Uniqueness and Innovation was rated as “Approaches,” because the school closely replicates other Explore schools throughout the state and there was not enough evidence about how the school would specifically fit into the education and community landscapes in Santa Fe and its surrounding communities.</p>

The application did not include a Yearly Calendar.

The Equity Plan was rated as “Approaches,” because it did not include a detailed plan to establish a CLR framework nor a detailed plan to attract and retain diverse teachers. The Graduation Requirements were rated as “Approaches,” because the response did not explain plans to support students who are behind in credits and did not explain the variance between EA-SFE’s graduation requirements and the states. Other issues are described below.

ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS

Most of the responses in the Organizational Framework section of the application were rated as “Approaches” or “Does Not Meet.”

There are concerns about the relationship between the Founding Team and the Governing Council and whether both groups will be overseeing the school’s academic, financial, and operational performance. It was not clear whether the Head Administrator would report strictly to the Governing Council or whether they would also be responsible to ELS. There was also a concern about the Finance Committee including the entire Governing Council.

Additionally, there was a concern about EA-SFE Governing Council members who teach at other Explore schools. It is technically allowed for teachers to serve on governing councils of schools where they aren’t employed. However, due to the close relationship between Explore schools and ELS, the peer review team felt it was not advisable for someone to work at one Explore school and sit on the Governing Council of another.

The application included two organizational charts - Year 1 and Year 5 - as well as a staffing table for each year. It was challenging to align the org charts and staffing table with the attached budget, and it appeared that some of the funds for staff named in the org chart and/or staffing table were not present in the budget or were in the incorrect function. The assistant principals and ancillary services are among the positions that couldn’t clearly be identified in the budget.

Job descriptions were provided as an attachment, but they were only for Year 1 positions and did not include lines of reporting or crucial details about job duties. No employee handbook was included with the application, and no contract terms or salary schedule were included either.

Transportation and food services plans seemed to lack crucial detail and the budgeted amounts for Year 1 did not seem sufficient to cover crucial costs. Additionally, the application stated that the school would likely bond for construction of a facility, but charter schools cannot sell bonds.

There were several other issues that should be addressed in the bylaws and organizational framework, which are detailed below.

FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS

The projected enrollment and 910B-5s met the criteria for success. However, the budget and budget narrative had significant issues, including expenditures exceeding revenue every year in Fund 11000. Other budget issues are detailed below.

Budget Adjustments were rated as “approaches,” because it was unclear exactly how EA-SFE would cut staff to stay within budget and whether proposed staffing adjustments, not teaching electives each day, would affect the required hours of classroom time.

An internal control policy was present in the application but was lacking the qualifications of the Office and Business Managers. The role of the Governing Council in internal controls policy was unclear. Segregation of Duties could not be fully assessed because some of the policies omitted who would be responsible for performing tasks like preparing and entering deposits and invoices into the software system. Additional issues are detailed below.

EVIDENCE OF SUPPORT ANALYSIS

Overall, the evidence of support for EA-SFE did not meet the criteria for success. The team conducted market research to analyze prospective support for the school. 400 respondents participated in the research and 83% indicated that they would either enroll or likely enroll. However, as of the application submission date, only 47 letters of interest had been submitted for grades K-3 and grade 6, which is a small number compared to the student population in Santa Fe (12,403 public school students, not counting charters) and the surrounding areas.

During the interview, several Santa Fe and surrounding area parents / proposed board members shared their support for the school and noted that their networks would also support the school. The team also shared that 15 families currently commute to Explore Academy-Albuquerque from the Santa Fe area. In the application and during the interview, the applicant team referenced outreach to parents, families, and educators, individually and in groups. It would have strengthened the application to know approximately how many meetings took place.

The application stated, “we have reached out to the Chamber of Commerce in Santa Fe to begin partnerships with community leaders and business leaders of Santa Fe and the greater county” and that the applicant team intends to form partnerships with Santa Fe Community College, Public Charter Schools of New Mexico, and the Association of Charter School Education Services. However, it does not appear that any partnerships with local businesses or organizations are already in place.

OVERALL APPLICANT CAPACITY REPORT

Overall, the peer reviewer team found that the applicant team has the capacity to successfully open a charter school. However, we have reservations about a potential lack of community support and that the relationship between ELS and Explore Academy - Santa Fe is too close to that of a charter management organization.

I. Academic Framework

A. Mission and Vision

<u>A. (1)</u>	<u>MISSION</u>
Rating	Expectations
Meets	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify how the proposed school will achieve its mission. Discuss the importance of the mission to your proposed community Be clear, concise, innovative, and measurable Discuss what mission success will look like
The Explore Santa Fe founding team's response for this section is complete.	

<u>A. (2)</u>	<u>VISION STATEMENT</u>
Rating	This narrative will be rated for completion, not content
Complete	<p>A complete response must describe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The team's reasoning and purpose Why your team is committed to providing a public education platform for your proposed community How your team intends to interact with your proposed community in order to provide their children with better academic outcomes What about your proposed program serves the proposed community in unique and innovative ways?
The Explore Santa Fe founding team's response for this section is complete.	

<u>A. (3)</u>	<u>UNIQUENESS AND INNOVATION</u>
Rating	Expectations
Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the uniqueness, innovation, and significant contribution of your educational program to the local NM public education environment; Describe the needs of the community; and Demonstrate how the applicant team knows there is a compelling demand for the proposed school's educational program in the geographic area in which the school plans to locate. Ensure that the evidence establishes a compelling demand for the proposed school's educational program based on reliable research, effective practices, or demonstrated success in schools with diverse characteristics.
The response describes the uniqueness and innovation of EA-SFE's educational program as compared to other schools in the Santa Fe area but does not provide evidence to establish how the applicant team knows there is a compelling demand for Explore's model in Santa Fe and its surrounding communities.	

B. Mission-Specific Goals

B.	<u>Mission-Specific Goals</u>
Rating	Expectations
Meets	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include two mission-specific goals; ● Align to the student outcomes identified in the mission response (A.1.); ● Be guided by the elements of the SMART format: ● Include measures and metrics. ● Include how the board of the proposed school intends to regularly monitor equitable mission success

The Explore Santa Fe founding team's response for this section is complete.

C. Curriculum, Educational Program, Student Performance Standards

C.	<u>Curriculum, Educational Program, Student Performance Standards</u>
Rating	Expectations
Meets	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Describe the proposed school's curriculum <i>including research-based evidence that supports the effectiveness of the selected model and the target population</i>; ● Describe how the proposed school's curriculum will meet the requirements of equity for all underserved populations. ● Identify information that demonstrates how the curriculum will align with the New Mexico Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and New Mexico Content Standards; ● Identify information that demonstrates how the curriculum will align with the proposed school's mission; and ● Include a reasonable (as based on the professional judgment of experienced educators) timeline and plan for the development of the entire proposed curriculum—including scope and sequence, unit plans, daily lesson plans, project plans and rubrics, and unit and course assessments.

The Explore Santa Fe founding team's response for this section is complete.

D. Bilingual Multicultural Education, Indian Education, Hispanic Education and Black Education

D (1).	<u>Bilingual Multicultural, Indian, Hispanic and Black Education Acts</u>
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Rating	Expectations
Meets	<p>A complete response must ensure equal education opportunities for students in New Mexico by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Addressing the goals of the Bilingual Multicultural Education Act (NMSA §22-23-1) including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ providing students with opportunities to expand their conceptual and linguistic abilities and potentials in a successful and positive manner; ○ teaching students to appreciate the value and beauty of different languages and cultures; and ○ meeting state academic content standards and benchmarks in all subject areas. ● Addressing the goals of the Indian Education Act (NMSA §22-23A-1) including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensuring equitable and culturally relevant learning environments and culturally relevant instructional materials for American Indian students ○ Providing for the study, development and implementation of educational systems that affect the educational success of American Indian students to close the achievement gap, increase graduation rates; ○ Encouraging and fostering parental involvement in the education of their children; and ○ Providing mechanisms to improve educational opportunities for Native American students for the purpose of closing the achievement gap, increasing graduation rates, and increasing postsecondary enrollment, retention, and completion. ● Addressing the purpose of the Hispanic Education Act (NMSA §22-23B-2), including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Providing for the study, development and implementation of educational systems that affect the educational success of Hispanic students to close the achievement gap, increase graduation rates; ○ Encouraging and fostering parental involvement in the education of their children; and ○ Providing mechanisms to improve educational opportunities for Hispanic students for the purpose of closing the achievement gap, increasing graduation rates, and increasing postsecondary enrollment, retention, and completion. ○ initiate and organize an equity council composed of multiple school stakeholders with the intent to create more equitable learning opportunities for marginalized students. ● Address the purpose of the Black Education Act (HB 43), including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Developing and including anti-racism policies ○ Developing curricula and instructional materials that recognize and teach black culture and anti-racism. Implementing anti-racism training for teachers and staff ○ Opportunities to explore one’s identity and societal systems that may impact their identity and future.
The Explore Santa Fe founding team's response for this section is complete.	

D (2).	Equity Plan Proposed school will create an effective and equitable system of supports for all students focused on root-cause analysis, equity-focused leadership, and continuous improvement, and culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum and pedagogy
Rating	Expectations
Approaches	<p>A complete response must ensure equal education opportunities for students in New Mexico by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A plan to initiate and organize an equity council composed of multiple school stakeholders with the intent to create more equitable learning opportunities for marginalized students. ● If the proposed school is to be located in a historically defined Indian impacted school district, a plan for conducting a needs assessment to determine what supports are needed in the public charter school, at home and in the community to help Indian students succeed in school, graduate with a diploma of excellence and be prepared to enter post-secondary education or the workplace. ● A detailed plan for the implementation of a culturally and linguistically responsive framework. ● A detailed plan for attracting and retaining quality and diverse teachers to teach New Mexico’s multicultural student population

The response did not include a detailed plan for the implementation of a culturally and linguistically responsive framework and did not include a detailed plan for attracting and retaining quality and diverse teachers to teach New Mexico's multicultural student population

E. Graduation Requirements

E.	<u>Graduation Requirements.</u>
Rating	Expectations
Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify all of the proposed school’s graduation requirements; ● Provide an explanation of how the proposed school will support students behind on graduation to earn a diploma. ● Provide proposed Alternative Demonstration of Competency policies if any ● Align to state graduation requirements OR explicitly identify all requirements that vary from state minimum requirements; and ● If there are variances from state minimum requirements explain the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ why the proposed school believes the change is important ○ how the change supports the mission ○ how the change ensures student readiness for college, career, or other post-secondary opportunities.

The response did not describe EA-SFE's plans to support students behind in credits and does not explain why EA-SFE's graduation requirements, above and beyond those required by the state, are important to the school's mission.

F. Instruction

F. (1) Instruction	<u>Teaching and Instructional Philosophy</u>
Rating	Expectations
Meets	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Describe the teaching and instructional philosophy of the proposed school; ● Identify primary instructional methods to be implemented that ensure equity and that align to the philosophy; ● Identify information that demonstrates the instructional methods are research-based; and ● Describe how the educational philosophy and instructional methods support and align to the mission and curriculum. ● How the proposed instructional methods will best support the population the school intends to serve.
The Explore Santa Fe founding team's response for this section is complete.	

F. (2) Instruction	<u>Yearly Calendar and Daily Schedule</u>
Rating	Expectations

Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include a yearly calendar that identifies the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Annual start date and end date ○ Teacher professional development days and times ○ School-wide assessment periods ○ School days, holidays, and partial days ○ Teacher parent conferences; ● Include a daily schedule that identifies the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Instructional times ○ Break times ○ Start and end times ○ Differences in the daily schedule for full and partial days; ● Meet all minimum hour (total instructional time) requirements laid out in NMSA 22-2-8.1; ● Describe how the calendar and schedule support the proposed school’s educational program; ● Describe how the calendar and schedule are optimal for achieving high outcomes for the anticipated student population; ● Describe the extended learning time programs to improve academic success of students and professional learning of teachers; ● If this is an elementary school, and you are participating in k-5 plus or extended learning program, describe the k-5 plus program and extended learning program and provide your calendar for year 2; and ● Be supported by the proposed budget found in the Financial Framework section of the application. ● Describe how the proposed calendar supports and values the community it intends to serve.
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No yearly calendar was included with the application. There was also no description of extended learning programs outside of one comment about plans to commit to k12 Plus in the first year of operation.

F. (3) Instruction	<u>How Instruction will be effective for the student population.</u>
Rating	Expectations

Meets	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify the anticipated student population, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Demographic information based on the local community population ○ Educational proficiency based upon enrollment at the school ○ Attendance and truancy trends ○ English language proficiency ○ Diverse populations ○ At-Risk populations ○ Special Educational needs; ● Explain any special factors influencing the makeup of the anticipated student population; ● Explain how the educational philosophy has been designed to meet students' needs; ● Explain how the instructional methods have been designed to meet students' needs and specifically how they will meet the needs of at-risk students; and ● Explain how the yearly calendar and daily schedule have been designed to meet students' needs. ● Explain how the yearly calendar and daily schedule have been designed to meet students' needs.
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The Explore Santa Fe founding team's response for this section is complete.

G. Special Populations

G.(1a)	<u>Instructional Services and Supports for Students with IEPs</u>
Rating	Expectations

Meets	<p>A complete response must</p> <p>Describe how the proposed school will identify and provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● instructional supports and services to the spectrum of needs of students with disabilities, who have IEPs or are eligible for an IEP; ● instructional supports and services to gifted students who have IEPs or are eligible for an IEP; <p>Describe how the proposed school will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure that students who are ELs are not over-identified as students with disabilities; ● Identify specific responsibilities for school staff, classroom teachers, and special education staff; and ● Identify specific training and support that will be provided to teachers and school staff to ensure they are able to fulfill their responsibilities. <p>Describe the proposed school's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Timeline, benchmarks, and people responsible for developing discipline policies and protocols for your special populations. ● Capacity of the school district in the geographic boundaries of the proposed school to provide special education services and FAPE. ● Process for tracking this protected population's progress and services, how that will be reported to the board.
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The Explore Santa Fe founding team's response for this section is complete.

G. (1b)	<u>Monitoring and Evaluation of Special Education Students</u>
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Rating	Expectations
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Meets	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Describe how the proposed school will monitor the progress toward special education students' attainment of IEP goals; ● Identify specific responsibilities for school staff, classroom teachers, and special education staff; including when and who will be reporting on progress towards goals. ● Identify the regular intervals at which progress will be monitored and success will be evaluated; ● Identify specific actions/reporting that will engage and inform students and or families; and ● Describe how the school will evaluate the effectiveness of its special education program and services. ● Describe how mission success will be tracked, measured, ensured, and reported on with these special populations.
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The Explore Santa Fe founding team's response for this section is complete.

G. (2)	<u>Required Curriculum and Instructional Supports for English Learners</u>
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Rating	Expectations
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Meets	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how the proposed school will identify English Learners (ELs) and provide the required curriculum and instructional services/supports to students identified as ELs; • Identify how the school will implement the English Language Development Standards for ELs in its school; • Identify how the school will provide ELs with instruction and support to develop English language proficiency; • Identify how the school will provide ELs with access to grade-level content; • Describe how the school will address the spectrum of needs that ELs may present; • Identify specific responsibilities for school staff and classroom teachers; and • Identify specific training, professional development and support that will be provided to teachers and school staff to ensure they are able to fulfill their responsibilities; • Describe the proposed school’s process for tracking this protected population’s progress and services, how that will be reported to the board.
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The Explore Santa Fe founding team's response for this section is complete.

G.(2b)	<u>Monitoring and Evaluation of English Learners</u>
Rating	Expectations
Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how the proposed school will monitor the progress of ELs toward English language proficiency, both annually and within the school year; • Identify specific responsibilities for school staff and classroom teachers; • Identify the regular intervals at which progress will be monitored; • Identify specific actions/reporting that will engage students and/or families; • Describe how the school will evaluate the effectiveness of its EL program and services; and • Describe how the school will monitor exited EL students (reclassified fluent English proficient students—RFEPs) for two years for academic progress.

The response included a detailed timeline with responsible parties. However, no detail was provided about how the school will use its Weekly Progress Report system, formative grades, and other schoolwide systems to specifically monitor progress for ELL students.

G. (3)	<u>Plan to adhere to ESSA and State Statutes</u>
Rating	Expectations

Meets	<p>A complete response must</p> <p>Describe how the proposed school will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop an educational framework to address the educational needs of Native American, Hispanic, Black, and bilingual multicultural students within a culturally and linguistically responsive approach to learning; ● Identify specific responsibilities for school staff and classroom teachers, including professional development for teachers; ● Ensure that the best practices are used in teaching, mentoring, counseling, and administration are culturally and linguistically responsive to students; ● Ensure policies will be culturally and linguistically responsive; ● Demonstrate rigorous and culturally meaningful curricula and instructional materials will be developed and implemented; ● Identify the regular intervals at which progress will be monitored; ● Identify specific actions/reporting that will engage students and/or families; and ● Evaluate the effectiveness of its programs to improve educational outcomes. ● Describe how the proposed school will meet the specific requirements of the Black Education Act
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NOTE: Although this response was scored as "Meets," more information should have been included about how EA-SFE will ensure policies will be culturally and linguistically responsive

H. Assessment and Accountability

H. (1)	<u>Assessment Plan</u>
Rating	Expectations
Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include an assessment calendar that identifies all state or district mandated assessment periods and dates related to teacher analysis/use of assessment data to inform instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Include assessments/progress monitoring for special populations; ● Identify, for all state or district mandated assessment periods, the grade levels at which the assessments will be administered; ● Describe, for all state or district mandated assessment periods, the specific data that will be collected, reported, analyzed, evaluated, and utilized to inform instruction; ● Describe how the data identified will be used to inform instruction; ● Describe the school’s philosophy on the use of data and how teachers will be onboarded, trained, and supported to ensure the schools philosophy is followed; ● Align with all state assessment and data reporting requirements; ● Describe how the assessment plan meets the specific needs to equitably assess the proposed school’s projected student population; ● Describe how the assessment plan aligns to the proposed school’s mission and any assessments that may be used to determine, measure, and track equitable mission achievement; and ● Include any assessments that may be negotiated as part of the performance framework and contract.

The calendar provided in this response did not describe how the assessment plan will meet the specific needs and equitably assess the proposed school's projected student population. Some assessments were included for identifying and assessing special populations, i.e., Lexercise and WIDA. However, outside of stating that exit exams would be used to monitor progress of EL students and students with IEPs and 504s, it was not clear how the specific needs of these students would be met through the proposed assessment plan.

H. (2)	<u>Plan for Data Assessment Analysis</u>
Rating	Expectations
Meets	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify the processes the school will use, including specific action steps, triggers that would prompt action steps, responsible parties, timelines, and associated costs, to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ monitor academic performance and ○ take appropriate corrective action if the school is not on track to or does not meet academic performance expectations; ● Address specific responsibilities related to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ meeting student academic achievement or growth expectations <u>at the school-wide level</u> and ○ meeting student academic achievement goals <u>at the individual student level</u> (remediation/at-risk student); and ● Describe how the school will regularly evaluate the effectiveness of its academic program generally and the effectiveness of specific corrective actions or interventions. ● Describe how the proposed school intends to use the data gathered from assessments to drive instruction ● Describe the board's role in analyzing the data gathered to inform school wide progress and potential changes.

The Explore Santa Fe founding team's response for this section is complete.

H. (3)	<u>Plan for Student Progress/Achievement & Communication Plan</u>
Rating	Expectations

Meets	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify how student achievement and progress will be communicated to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Students ○ Parents ○ The governing body ○ The authorizer ○ The broader community; ● Identify the communication plan for each of the specific sources of student achievement data identified in H. (1) and any other relevant sources of student achievement data; and ● Provide information that demonstrates the plan is effective in reaching the targeted population and the specific community in which the school plans to locate.
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The Explore Santa Fe founding team's response for this section is complete.

II. Organizational Framework

A. Governing Body Creation/Capacity

A charter application shall include a description of the governing body and operation of the charter school, including: (1) how the governing body will be selected; (2) qualification and terms of members, how vacancies on the governing body will be filled and procedures for changing governing body membership; and (3) the nature and extent of parental, professional educator and community involvement in the governance and operation of the school (NMSA 22-8B-8(l)).

A. (1)	<u>Key Components of Governance Structure</u>
Rating	Expectations
Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include governing body bylaws in Appendix A; and ● Summarize <u>key</u> governance components in the application response as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Membership structure (number, roles, length of terms) ○ Officer structure (roles, election process, responsibilities, length of terms) ○ Committee structure that includes both legally required committees and school-specific committees (selection process, responsibilities, membership, length of service terms) ○ Member recruitment, selection, discipline, and removal processes.

The proposed governance structure has several issues that should be addressed:

The by-laws stated: In the event that the council membership drops below three (3), the remaining board members may appoint new members until there are three to establish a quorum for voting. Statute requires no less than 5 members on a board.

In the by-laws, "related parties" should specify exactly who is considered a related party (i.e., spouse, child, business partner, etc.).

The by-laws stated that the Finance Committee would be all members and be a part of the monthly meeting. The narrative stated that a Finance Committee would be formed and "could be" a committee of all board

members. However, the response stated that a majority of the Audit Committee members would not be otherwise on the standing Finance Committee to avoid any conflicts of interest. But, if all members of the Council are on the Finance committee, they would be in violation of their by-laws.

Neither the bylaws nor narrative mentioned that the board will be required to be a Board of Finance since they will be chartered under the NM PEC.

A. (2)	<u>Governing Body Qualifications</u>
Rating	Expectations
Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify all qualifications and skill sets that the governing body will require and ensure those are represented within its regular membership and how the proposed board would be able to ensure the long-term success of this school if, by some circumstance, the Founders were no longer involved. ● Explain why and how the identified qualifications and skills will ensure the governing body has the required capacity and enable the governing body to operate a successful, high-quality public school; ● Describe how the board will ensure robust board membership including training expectations, time commitments, and member onboarding. ● Include a list of all proposed initial governing body members, describe each proposed member’s specific qualifications and skill sets through verifiable prior experience, and ensure the represented qualifications and skill sets align with the previously identified qualifications and skill sets that the governing body will require.

There is a concern that the EA-SFE Founding Team will be another layer on top of the Governing Council, thereby duplicating the role of the Governing Council. After the school is approved, the Founding Team should allow the Governing Council to make decisions.

There are also concerns about potential conflicts of interests for proposed governing council members who teach at other Explore schools in New Mexico. Although teachers are allowed to serve on GCs of schools where they are not employed, this particular situation is not advised, as all of the Explore schools in New Mexico are heavily connected with the Founding Team and staff of Explore Learning Services.

The application stated that a qualification to serve on the Council would be a demonstrated record of serving successfully on nonprofit Councils. Only one proposed board member has this qualification.

A. (3)	<u>Selection of Governing Body Members</u>
Rating	Expectations

Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify a regular and ongoing governing body recruitment process, including identification of action steps, timelines, and responsible parties; ● Describe the onboarding process, the board’s role in chartering and re-chartering, authorizer relations, and time commitment.
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Similarly, to the response for C I - A 2, there is a concern that the EA-SFE Founding Team will be another layer on top of the Governing Council, thereby duplicating the role of the Governing Council. After the school is approved, the Founding Team should allow the Governing Council to make decisions.

Additionally, the response did not address the Council's role in chartering and re-chartering.

B. Governing Body Training and Evaluation

B. (1)	<u>Governing Body Training Plan</u>
Rating	Expectations
Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify a process for governing body member onboarding to ensure new members are properly trained and able to meet the obligations and fulfill the responsibilities of governing body service, include action & monitoring steps, timelines, and responsible parties; ● Describe how the plan will identify governing body training needs, meet governing body training needs, and comply with state requirements, including any requirements that may change from year to year; ● Identify any costs required to support the training plan or onboarding process and describe how those costs are supported in the budget; and ● Develop an onboarding process and training that all new board members will be expected to complete including an outline of topics, who will be responsible for onboarding new board members, timeline for onboarding, and procedure for gathering feedback on the effectiveness of the onboarding process. ● Ensure the onboarding process and training plan address training on the open meetings act and responsibilities.

Although the GC hires the Head Administrator, it is unclear whether the Head Administrator reports to the GC or to the Founding Team or both about EA-SFE academics and finances.

The response also states: "Funding for registration and travel for required training will be included in the overall school budget on an annual basis as need is expressed by current GC members". However, there is no money in the budget document for board training.

B. (2)	<u>Governing Body Self-Evaluation Plan</u>
Rating	Expectations

Meets	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify a plan for annual governing body self-evaluation, include action steps, timelines, responsible parties, timeline on the annual board calendar and identified criteria or standards; and ● Describe how the identified plan will focus on and support continuous improvement.
<p>The Explore Santa Fe founding team's response for this section is complete.</p>	

C. Leadership and Management

C. (1)	<u>Governing Body Plan for Monitoring Outcomes</u>
Rating	Expectations
Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify a plan for how the governing body will monitor academic performance on an ongoing basis, include action steps, timelines, responsible parties, and identified criteria or standards; ● Identify a plan for how the governing body will monitor organizational performance on an ongoing basis, include action steps, timelines, responsible parties, and identified criteria or standards; ● Identify a plan for how the governing body will monitor financial performance on an ongoing basis, include action steps, timelines, responsible parties, and identified criteria or standards; and ● Describe how each of the monitoring plans will focus on ensuring the school is meeting its mission, providing a quality education, and acting as a responsible public entity. ● Describe how all of the above will be reflected in meeting agendas and the annual board calendar
<p>It appears that the finance and audit committees will duplicate the job of the Head Administrator who hires the business manager and evaluates the business manager.</p> <p>The response also should have included monitoring any audit variances / findings as a part of the GC's ongoing work</p>	

C. (2)	<u>Plan for Hiring Head Administrator</u>
Rating	Expectations

Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify an ongoing process for hiring a head administrator, both for the initial hiring and for any time the position becomes vacant, include action steps, timelines, responsible parties, and identified criteria or standards; ● Identify all leadership characteristics and all qualifications the head administrator must possess; ● Explain why and how the identified leadership characteristics; including educational background, experience and qualifications will ensure the head administrator has the required capacity and enable the head administrator to operate the proposed school as a successful, high-quality public charter school; ● Explain how the identified leader, both for the initial hiring and for any time the position becomes vacant, will be on boarded including setting the expectations of how they will be reporting to, and working for and with the board. ● Describe how the identified process will ensure the school is able to identify and equitably (openly advertise and interview multiple candidates) hire a highly qualified, licensed administrator; and ● If a potential head administrator has already been identified and/or is a founder, include an assurance that the individual understands they must be selected and hired by an independent governing body and identify the individual’s specific leadership skills and qualifications, through verifiable prior experience, that makes them qualified for the position, including holding the required licensure.
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Once the GC is named, it is the role of the GC to review head administrator candidates and conduct interviews. The Founding Team should have no influence over the GC.

The response also did not address how the head administrator will be onboarded.

C. (3)	<u>Distinguished Roles & Responsibilities</u>
Rating	Expectations
Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify the process the governing body will use for distinguishing their roles and responsibilities with those of the head administrator; ● Include specific actions the governing body will take to ensure the head administrator understands the obligations of the charter contract, the boards’ role in oversight and chartering, and the requirements of all elements of the plan contained in this application; and ● Attach a job description in Appendix B that includes the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lists all major responsibilities of the head administrator ○ Includes responsibilities that are unique to charter school leaders ○ Includes responsibilities that specifically relate to the school’s mission, goals, and educational philosophy ○ Identifies all hiring requirements including all previously identified requirements related to characteristics and qualifications.

There should be a clear delineation between the role of Business Manager and Head Administrator regarding managing staff payroll.

The Head Administrator job description could also have elaborated more on candidate qualifications outside of needing a Level IIIB License

C. (4)	<u>Head Administrator Evaluation Plan</u>
Rating	Expectations
Meets	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify the plan for annually evaluating the head administrator, including action steps, timelines, responsible parties, and standards or criteria including how this will be maintained in the boards’ annual calendar process; ● Include action steps to evaluate the effectiveness of the head administrator ● Describe how the plan specifically takes into account ensuring the equitable implementation of the mission and goals of the proposed school; and ● Ensure the plan meets the requirements identified in NMAC 6.69.7.8 and 6.69.7.9.

The Explore Santa Fe founding team's response for this section is complete.

D. Organizational Structure of the Proposed School

D. (1)	<u>Organizational Chart</u>
Rating	Expectations
Does Not Meet	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include an organizational chart for each year as part of the rollout with grade additions; ● Show how the Equity Council is incorporated into to organizational chart; ● Include a narrative that describes the structures and relationships represented in the organizational chart; ● Include all entities essential to the operation and success of the proposed school; and ● Describe the relationship among each of the relevant entities.

The response included only 2 Organizational Charts - Year 1 and Full Implementation. Although it was possible to see grade progressions in the 910B-5 document and staffing plan, it was challenging to align everything to see whether proposed year to year staffing transitions were appropriate and aligned to enrollment projections.

Although the Equity Council was present on the org chart, there was no mention of its role in the school.

The Head Administrator should have been budgeted in Function 2300, even if they act as Principal.

The narrative states there will be 2 assistant principals, but it is unclear if these positions are in the budget or if they are budgeted to the incorrect function.

The org chart outlines anticipated service providers including ancillary services. The budget includes a line item for "Specialists," but it was unclear whether and how these aligned to the proposed ancillary services from the org chart.

D. (2)	<u>Job Descriptions for Certified/Licensed Staff</u>
Rating	Expectations
Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ all certified and licensed staff identified in the application ○ all non-certified or unlicensed staff identified in the application who could be considered essential to the operation and success of the proposed school ○ any non-traditional roles or positions; ● Describe why the identified roles are key to the operation and success of the proposed school; and ● Attach staff job descriptions as Appendix C for all of the positions identified in the application response and include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ List all major responsibilities of the positions ○ Include responsibilities that specifically relate to the school’s mission, goals, and educational philosophy ○ Identify all hiring requirements including qualifications and licensure or certification ○ Identify reporting lines (“reports to”) that align to the organizational chart.

The provided job descriptions were only for Year 1 staff and did not contain lines of reporting. There were no job descriptions included for Assistant Principal, Instructional Coach, and several other key staff. The Job Descriptions were also lacking details about job duties and the role each staff member plays in the school's mission.

D. (3)	<u>Staffing Needs and Plan</u>
Rating	Expectations
Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify an ongoing staffing plan and process for hiring all necessary staff, both for the initial hiring and for any time a position becomes vacant, include action steps, timelines, responsible parties; ● Describe how the staffing plan and process will ensure the school is able to hire highly qualified staff, no later than two weeks prior to the start of the proposed school year, on an annual basis, and fill all vacancies within a reasonable time; include how the school will recruit and hire highly qualified licensed staff; ● Describe how the staffing plan and process is reasonable and adequate to support effective and timely implementation of the academic program/curriculum during the planning year and for all subsequent years; ● Describe how the staffing plan and process is aligned with the budget and the school’s projected enrollment; and ● Describe how the school will make adjustments to the staffing plan in the case that there are differences in projected and actual enrollment.

Year 1 staff should be hired by the Head Administrator, not the Founding Team.

It was challenging to align the staffing plan from the narrative with the attached budget. No budget for an Activities/Flex Coordinator was identified; it was unclear whether all Principal and Assistant Principal positions were budgeted at all or if they were in the incorrect function with incorrect job codes. There Was a budget for Maintenance and Speech therapist in years 4 and 5 but there was no job description or mention in the narrative

D. (4)	<u>Professional Development Plan</u>
Rating	Expectations
Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify an annual professional development plan with action steps, timelines, responsible parties, and associated costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Describe how the plan meets state requirements and rules; and ○ Describe how the school will ensure professional development time is not used for routine staff meetings. ● Identify a mentorship plan for novice teachers, including action steps, timelines, responsible parties, and associated costs that meets the requirements of PED rules; and ● Describe how the annual professional development plan and the mentorship plan for novice teachers ensure the following occur: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ are supported by the budget ○ support the implementation of the proposed school’s educational plan, mission, and performance goals ○ not only address required annual training but are also tailored to address school- and teacher-specific professional development needs.

The response states "As seen within the projected budget (function 2400, under Contracted Services), the school allots money for teacher professional development, including its mentorship program, beginning in its first year of operation." However, the budget includes no money in Function 2400. Additionally, teacher PD should be budgeted under function 1000, object 53330.

E. Employees

E.	<u>Employer/Employee Terms</u>
Rating	Expectations
Does Not Meet	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify all primary classes of employees the school will employ (e.g., administrative, professional, term, contract); ● Include an employment policy and handbook ● Provide an explanation for onboarding new staff and re-training returning staff on the terms within the handbook and policy. ● Explain how the school, through the governing body and head administrator, will address employee unions and other school-specific employee representatives.

No Employee Handbook was included, and the response included in the narrative does not address onboarding new staff and re-training returning staff. No contract terms, salary schedule, or yearly calendar were included.

The response states " A licensed employee’s salary will be based on the NMPED-mandated three-tier license salary schedule." Does this mean licensed non-teaching staff will be paid from the 3-tier licensure system?

The response includes benefits, but the budget does not include all benefits for all functions and job classes.

The response states both: "The provisions of the EA-SFE Handbook will be developed in the planning year, at the direction of the founding Governing Council" and "For a full review of the Handbook see the attachments." However, there are no attachments for an employee handbook.

In the grievance section, the response states "If the employees are not able to resolve their differences, then they may request a supervisor provide mediation to work through the conflict. The resolution that is determined through this meeting should be considered final." What if one or both employees do not agree with the supervisor's resolution?

F. Community/Parent/Employee Involvement in Governance

F. (1)	<u>Parental, Professional Educator, and Community Involvement in Governance Plan</u>
Rating	Expectations
Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify school operation and governance structures that will provide the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A meaningful opportunity for parental input and participation ○ A meaningful opportunity for professional educator input and participation ○ A meaningful opportunity for community input and participation; ● Describe how the structures will facilitate parental involvement that will help advance the proposed school’s mission; ● Explain the role of the Equity Council in the governance and operation of the proposed school; ● Include assurances that the school understands it may not require family or parental support or involvement as grounds for accepting, not accepting, enrolling, dis-enrolling, or otherwise differentiating treatment of a student; and ● If the school plans to offer opportunities for parent support, explain the process of opting out for parents who are unwilling or unable to meet the proposed school’s support opportunities.

The GC should have a standing item on their agenda for public comment, so anyone from the community can speak before the GC rather than being screened before going to the GC.

F. (2)	<u>Plan for Processing Concerns and Complaints</u>
Rating	Expectations

Meets	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify a grievance process to receive and process concerns and complaints from the community, parents and families, and students that includes action steps, timelines, and responsible parties; ● Include a final step in the process that provides the grievant a meaningful opportunity to be heard by, and receive a response from, the governing body; if they are unable to obtain resolution from the head administrator; ● Describe how the process is transparent, fair, accessible to the community, and ensure a timely and meaningful response; and ● describe how the school will provide assurances that the school will additionally meet the specific legal requirements of the McKinney Vento and special education grievance processes.
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The Explore Santa Fe founding team's response for this section is complete

G. Student Recruitment and Enrollment

G. (1)	<u>Outreach & Recruitment Plan</u>
Rating	Expectations
Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify a prospective student outreach and recruitment plan, including action steps, timelines, responsible parties, and associated costs; ● Describe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ how the plan is tailored to ensure equal access to the school ○ why the plan is likely to attract a student body that is demographically reflective of the local community and school district; ○ provide a description of how the school will change recruitment plans and outreach if projected student enrollment is not reached ● Describe how the school will annually evaluate the effectiveness of the outreach and recruitment efforts in ensuring equal access to the school and attracting a student body that is demographically reflective of the local community and school district and how the school will use that information to make adjustments to the outreach and recruitment plan.

Response states that there will be a budget for digital and direct mail advertising, but these costs could not be located in the budget.

Several different outlets are utilized to notify parents of a new school, but the response does not make it clear whether these methods are effective for all members of the proposed community including homeless students.

G. (2)	<u>Lottery Admission Process</u>
Rating	Expectations

Meets	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify a plan to implement a lottery admission process, if necessary, include action steps, timelines, and responsible parties; ● Describe each of the steps of the process to include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pre-lottery entry ○ Lottery ○ Post-lottery registration ○ Waitlist maintenance and entry; and ● Describe how the lottery process supports equal access to the school.
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NOTE: Although this response was scored as "Meets," there is a concern that a lottery process should not use the word "enrollment" on any of its forms, because it could lead a prospective student/family to believe they are being enrolled in the school.

H. Legal Compliance

H.	<u>Conflict of Interest Policy</u>
Rating	Expectations
Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide a governing body conflict of interest policy that includes action steps, timelines, and responsible parties; ● Describe how the policy meets the requirements of New Mexico law addressing all areas of potential conflicts of interest; and ● Include all forms the governing body will or may be required to submit pursuant to the policy.

There is a conflict-of-interest policy in the Governing Council bylaws, but no forms were included with the application.

The Conflict-of-Interest Policy defines an immediate family member as one of the following individuals: significant other, mother, father, mother-in-law, father-in-law, daughter, son, daughter-in-law, son-in-law their reading of the Conflict-of-Interest Policy, as well as an opportunity for the Governing Council Member to identify and report any potential conflict of interest. The actual law states spouse, not significant other and also includes any other relative who is financially supported.

Although it is written in the charter application, The actual, included Conflict of Interest Policy did not include Sections A or B of NMSA 22-8B-5.2 Governing Body Conflicts of Interest.

I. Evidence of Partnership/Contractor relationship (if applicable)

I. (1)	<u>Essential Third-Party Relationships</u>
Rating	Expectations

Does Not Meet	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify any third-party relationships with specific, identified organizations that control or influence essential elements—including the existence, operation, curriculum, or instruction of the proposed charter school—that are required by a partner organization or any part of the application; ● Describe, in detail, the relationships; ● Describe why the relationships are essential or required, or how they control essential elements of the proposed charter school; ● If any such relationships exist identify the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The specific, identified organizations ○ Contact information for that organization ○ Specific individuals in the organization that will be associated with the proposed school; ● Describe all legal implications of the essential/required relationships, including the legal benefits and responsibilities of each party.
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Although the application states that EA-SFE may choose whether or not to contract with ELS, the application still should have included the proposed terms of a relationship between ELS and EA-SFE. Without an MOU, it is unclear what services ELS is proposing to offer EA-SFE at what cost, which makes it difficult to accurately assess the school's proposed curriculum, PD, operations, financial framework, and budget.

I. (2)	<u>Appendix D Attachment Formal Agreement Documentation</u>
Rating	Expectations
Does Not Meet	<p>A response is only required if relationships were identified in questions I. (1)</p> <p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify all MOUs or formal agreements that are attached in Appendix D; ● Include proposed formal agreements or MOUs that are signed in Appendix D; and ● Identify the responsibilities, activities, and costs of both sides.

The response in section I 1 state that there is no third-party relationship but this response states that there will be an MOU if the charter is approved.

J. Transportation and Food

J. (1)	<u>Transportation Plan</u>
Rating	Expectations

Approaches	<p>A response is only required if the school plans to offer regular transportation either for daily transportation to/from school OR for transportation to/from school specific activities and events that are a necessary part of the mission. All schools must be prepared to meet IEP transportation requirements.</p> <p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify a plan for establishing transportation services at the school including specific action steps, timelines responsible parties, and associated costs that address the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identifying equipment purchase or contracting needs ○ Identifying hiring and or contracting needs ○ Hiring or contracting ○ Establishing training needs and inspection process needs ○ Establishing travel routes and pick up/drop off points ○ Establishing transportation policies and practices ○ Identifying student transportation needs; transportation plan costs; and ● Identify all, but at least one, specific entities or organizations that have been identified as potential partners or vendors for these services
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The amount of additional funds budgeted to transportation to cover Year 1 costs do not seem adequate to cover the full costs of student transportation (i.e., The costs of purchasing and maintaining a bus, paying a bus driver, etc.).

The application states that 38% of students would ride the bus but does not describe where that percentage came from

Potential vendors are only described as "local" and the criteria for how a vendor will be selected are not included.

No transportation policies or plans are included with the application.

J. (2)	<u>Food Services Plan</u>
Rating	Expectations

Approaches	<p>A response is only required if the school plans to offer food services at the school.</p> <p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify a plan for establishing food services at the school, including specific action steps, timelines responsible parties, and associated costs that address the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identifying equipment purchase or contracting needs ○ Identifying hiring and/or contracting needs ○ Hiring or contracting ○ Establishing training and inspection process needs ○ Identifying and completing relevant program application and reporting requirements; ● Identify all federal and state food service programs the school plans to participate in; ● If providing or planning to offer a PreK or Early Childhood program, provide a plan for food service; ● Identify how the school will fund the food service plan costs prior to receiving any applicable reimbursements; and ● Identify all, but at least one, specific entities or organizations that have been identified as potential partners or vendors for these services and describe all steps that have been taken to create a relationship, establish a relationship, or develop a partnership to provide these services.
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The charter writer states, regarding the budget for food services: The school will not budget for this expenditure, as this service will be funded entirely through student/parent funding, however the school will be required to cover the cost for meal payments until reimbursements for programming from the government are received. There is conflict in this statement.... "this service will be funded entirely through student parent/funding... " and then "reimbursements for programming from the government are received." Which is it? The school did include Revenue and Expenditures for food services in fund 21000. Additionally, the state, through legislative actions, is providing free lunch to all students, so parents/students will not need to fund this. The school says it will contract for food services but will not include any money in their budget for food services. The cost is to be paid for by the parents/students. There is no information on process for parents that cannot pay or homeless. There is no food service manager, just the head administrator and some educational assistants to be trained. There is no cost associated with any of the suggested providers.

K. Facilities/School Environment

K. (1)	<u>Appendix E Attachment: Facilities Master Plan Ed/ Spec Checklist</u>
Rating	Expectations
Does Not Meet	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demonstrate the applicant submitted a Facilities Master Plan to PSFA by the deadline; ● If offering or planning or offer a PreK or Early Childhood program, provide a description of the facilities and playground in the Facilities Master Plan; and ● Demonstrate the PSFA has approved the applicant’s Facilities Master Plan.

The letter from PSFA states that the educations specs have been approved but states that the complete FMP must be submitted with the application but there is no Plan submitted.

K. (2)	<u>Evidence of Researched Facilities/Properties</u>
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Rating	Expectations
Does Not Meet	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demonstrate the applicant has done the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conducted outreach and researched multiple facilities or properties in the targeted geographic location to understand if there are public facilities that are available, appropriate, and viable ○ Identified whether or not each potential property will meet the requirements of NMSA 1978 § 22-8B-4.2, including occupancy, adequacy, and ownership; ● Identify at least one potential facility or property that meets requirements. ● Identify a plan that would enable the applicant to prepare the facility/property to meet the facility needs of the proposed school in time for the proposed school's opening date, include specific action steps, timelines, responsible parties, and capital outlay needs; ● Identify how the project to prepare the facility will be funded.

The response states that the school will bond for construction money, but charter schools cannot sell bonds - only LEAs can. Other options are suggested but no cost information was included, the timeline included limited detail, and no information was included about City Council/City of Santa Fe approval prior to construction or renovation of an existing facility

III. Financial Framework

A. School Size

A.	<u>Projected Enrollment</u>
Rating	Expectations
Meets	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify the anticipated number of students for each of the first five years and “at capacity”, based on the long-term strategic plan; ● Identify the grade levels requested to be served in each of the first five years (phase in plan) and “at capacity”, based on the long term strategic plan; and ● Identify the student/teacher ratio (not student/staff ratio) that aligns with the number of students served, grade levels, and staffing plan for each of the first five years and “at capacity”, based on the long term strategic plan.

The Explore Santa Fe founding team's response for this section is complete.

B. Budgets

B. (1)	<u>Attached Appendix F, 910B5 State Equalization Guarantee (SEG)</u>
Rating	Expectations

Meets	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include a complete 910B5 Worksheet in Appendix F; ● Use appropriate values and computations in each year; ● Use projected unit value; and ● Budget the correct special education percentage based on the local special education population, unless the school has a sufficient justification for why it will have a larger population (provide justification, if applicable).
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NOTE: This response was scored as "meets," but more detail should be provided about how the school will adjust the budget in the event enrollment projections are not met.

B. (2)	<u>Attached Appendix G: Proposed five-year Budget Plan</u>
Rating	Expectations
Does Not Meet	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include a five-year budget plan in Appendix G that is based on the 910B5 SEG Revenue Worksheet from Appendix F; ● Support the proposed school’s mission and all elements of the proposed program laid out in the application; and ● Align with the proposed school’s five-year growth plan.

1. There are no costs in the budget for testing (function 2200)
2. The school leader/Principal should be budgeted in function 2300 and job code 11111
3. There is no office/clerical budgeted for year 1, but this position is included in year 1 in the budget narrative
4. There is nothing in the budget for furniture or equipment
5. It is unclear if and how ancillary services are budgeted
6. There is no budget for technology items (computers, printers, etc.)
7. There is no budget for professional development (object code 53330) and no additional compensation for teacher mentors (object code 51300 in function 1000)
8. There is no FICA budgeted in year 1 in any of the functions and there is no Medicare budgeted in any function for any year.
9. There is no budget in any of the functions for life, dental, vision and LTD insurance.
10. There is no budget for the quarterly workers compensation fee in any of the functions (object code 52720)
11. There is nothing budgeted for board training
12. There is a small amount budgeted in years 2-5 for student transportation (function 3100) but the narrative states all to-from school transportation will be paid through Fund 13000 Transportation in those years.
13. In function 2300 there is budget for administrative associates, but these positions are not mentioned in the budget narrative
14. The budget narrative speaks to hiring assistant principals, but there is no budget in function 2400 for these positions

15. There is money in Fund 24146 of \$250,000, but that fund is obsolete as of FY24.

16. Charter School Division startup funds were included in the budget, even though there will not be startup funding available.

17. In every year, expenditures are greater than revenue in the operating fund, with a total year deficit of \$2,420,693.00. The budget writer did include projected revenue from grants; however, the budget writer did not include any expenditures in the grants. Since the budget writer failed to relieve any expenditures from the operating fund (Fund 11000) and move those expenditures into whatever grant they expect to use to pay for those expenditures, it leaves the operating fund (Fund 11000) in a negative state for all 5 years.

B. (3)	<u>Budget Narrative</u>
Rating	Expectations
Does Not Meet	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explain basic assumptions; ● Identify reliable sources for each assumption; ● Include priorities consistent with the proposed school’s mission; ● Include priorities consistent with the proposed school’s educational program; ● Include priorities consistent with the proposed school’s staffing; and ● Include priorities consistent with the proposed school’s facility.

See above comments about the budget. These items were not addressed in the Budget Narrative response.

B. (4)	<u>Budget Adjustments</u>
Rating	Expectations
Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Describe budget control strategies as well as budget adjustments that will be made to meet financial budget and cash-flow challenges; ● Describe budget control strategies as well as budget adjustments that will be made to address the failure to receive any anticipated funding sources; ● Include explanations that are viable and realistic, based on the professional judgment of experienced, licensed, school business officials; ● Address how special education students will receive services before special education funding is provided, based on accurate 40-day counts; and ● Address how gaps between budgeted students and actual enrollment will be addressed. ● Demonstrate how budget control strategies provide capacity to manage the budget successfully. ● Address how the school will modify the budget for students with special needs. ● describe how the proposed school will address the budget in the event that the proposed school has budgeted for more students, based on early enrollment, than actually enroll in the proposed school at the beginning of the proposed school year.

When addressing budget adjustments to meet potential revenue challenges, the response states "Shuffling days when classes are taught (as needed). Electives can rotate on a weekly basis for K-5 (rather than being

taught each day) to provide flexibility." It is unclear how such a change would affect the required 1140 hours of classroom time.

C. Financial Policies, Oversight, Compliance, and Sustainability

C. (1)	<u>Internal Control Procedures</u>
Rating	Expectations
Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify all the internal control procedures that have been attached in Appendix H; ● Attach in Appendix H internal control procedures the proposed school will utilize to assure the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ safeguard assets ○ segregate its payroll ○ segregate cash and check disbursement duties ○ provide reliable financial information and promote operational efficiency ○ ensure compliance with all applicable federal and state statutes, regulations, and rules; ● Attach procedures that—based on the professional judgment of experienced, licensed, school business officials—successfully ensure appropriate segregation of duties; and ● Provide a process the school will use to regularly evaluate compliance with the internal control procedures that have been attached in Appendix H and other internal control procedures that will be developed and implemented by the school.

Internal Control policy is present but there is no information on the qualifications of the Office Manager and Business Manager. It is unclear who would have decision making authority. The role of the Governing Council in the internal controls policy is also unclear.

The policy states that the Office Manager will both receive cash/checks and make deposits. These two tasks should be performed by two separate people to ensure segregation of duties and safeguard funds. The cash receipts policy also omits who will prepare the deposit and who will enter the deposit into the accounting software system. Therefore, segregation of duties cannot be fully assessed for the cash receipts process.

Under the invoice processing and payment section, it is not noted who will enter invoices into the accounting software system. Therefore, segregation of duties cannot be fully assessed for the accounts payable process.

The purchasing policy/procedure should include the provision for not artificially dividing purchases.

The travel policy does not address mileage reimbursement.

It is unclear who will enter payroll data into the accounting software.

Independent contractors should be required to provide the school with a copy of any required licenses.

C. (2)	<u>Staff for Financial Tasks</u>
Rating	Expectations

Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify the appropriate staff to perform each financial task identified in the response to B (1) and all other required financial tasks; ● Align completely with the organizational chart from response to D (1) in the Organizational Framework; ● Align completely with the budget in A (1) and A (2) responses in Financial Framework; ● Describe appropriate qualifications and responsibilities for each of the identified positions; and ● Include a plan that will result in the recruitment, identification, the evaluation of candidates, and the hiring of highly qualified staff for each of the identified positions, no later than two weeks prior to the start of the proposed school year.
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The tentative relationship between EA-SFE and Axiom Analytics could be further clarified in this application, as the CEO of Axiom Analytics is listed as part of the founding team.

Segregation of duties between the Office Manager, Business Manager, and other finance staff could be further clarified. The Business Manager seems to be omitted from a lot of the budget process.

C. (3)	<u>Governing Body Legal & Fiscal Oversight</u>
Rating	Expectations
Does Not Meet	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Describe how the Governing Body audit and finance committees will be formed and how they will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Function generally ○ Ensure proper legal oversight ○ Ensure proper financial oversight; ● Describe how the proposed school’s audit and finance committees will interact with the school’s management; and ● Describe how the audit and finance committees will interact with the full Governing Body.

The response states "EA-SFE will also retain the same audit firm for any other required reporting, including but not limited to the filing of its annual 990 return with IRS and other tax matters." The school is a government entity and is not required to file an annual 990 with the IRS.

It is unclear how the audit and finance committee will interact with the GC as a whole. The response states "Ultimately the principal/head administrator will report to the Governing Council, not individual committees." It should be the responsibility of the GC committee members to report to the Council as part of their fiduciary responsibilities.

The response did not address how the governing body and the audit and finance committees would ensure proper legal oversight.

IV. Evidence of Support

A. Outreach Activities

A.	<u>Outreach Program</u>
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Rating	Expectations
Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe an outreach program to develop community support for the proposed school that has been implemented during the application process; Describe specific activities that have been implemented, include evidence of implementation; Include evidence that demonstrates the activities reached a broad audience that is representative of the community in which the proposed school will be located; and Describe how this outreach has enabled the applicant team to understand the needs of the community in which the proposed school intends to locate.

The response does not include quantitative data about the number of students who travel from Santa Fe to EA-ABQ or any other quantitative data demonstrating that activities have reached a broad audience that is representative of the community.

The response states that "This effort has been replicated in Las Cruces, NM and Rio Rancho, NM." However, the Rio Rancho school has yet to open.

B. Community Support

B.	<u>Evidence of Community Support</u>
Rating	Expectations
Approaches	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include quantitative data that demonstrates community support from a broad audience for this proposed school; Include qualitative data that demonstrates community support from a broad audience for this proposed school; Include descriptions of the anticipated demographics of the students who will be served by the proposed school, disaggregate the number of prospective students by zip code, school of attendance (current), gender, type of current school (home, private, public), or other pertinent data. Ensure the demonstrated support includes support within the community of the specific targeted geographic location; and Describe why the applicant team believes the evidence demonstrates the school will be embraced and supported as the community’s school and that there is abundant support for this school as a part of the community.

The charter writer states that 400 families responded to queries and 83% (332 families) would or would likely enroll. Further stated that 47 interest forms were collected (later in the section it was stated that there were 71). But, with 12,403 students in the District (not counting charter schools), this equates to 0.4%. This does not really reflect community support for this charter school

In Academic Framework, Innovation and Uniqueness (A-3) the charter writer stated: Bringing the Explore model to Santa Fe could benefit the surrounding areas, such as Pecos, Tesuque, Lamy, and Espanola. However,

they did not provide any data-based evidence that there were outreach activities in these communities or interest for their school in these communities.

C. Community Relationships

C.	<u>Networking with Community</u>
Rating	Expectations
Does Not Meet	<p>A complete response must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and describe specific meaningful and strategic networking relationships with local community agencies, groups, or individuals that will support the school. Include evidence of these relationships; • Identify and describe specific meaningful and strategic resource agreements with local community agencies, groups, or individuals that will support the school. Include evidence of these relationships; and • Describe why the applicant team believes the identified relationships demonstrate the school will be embraced and supported as the community's school and that there is abundant support for this school as a part of the community.

The only community organization that was named in the response was the Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce. The response said other meetings had taken place but provided no names of people or organizations and no qualitative or quantitative evidence of meetings or relationships.

Capacity Interview

Question 1	How will the mission, as described in the application, enhance, and transform the proposed community?
Rating	Approaches

The applicant team described the tenets of the Explore model and how it differs from other Santa Fe schools: The proposed school would be a K-12 school and would allow for more choice and flexibility than other schools. The team also noted that other Santa Fe charter schools have long wait lists. However, it was unclear how the proposed school's mission would be specific to the proposed community of Santa Fe and would make a specific difference to the Santa Fe community.

Question 2	What is the most important contribution your proposed school will bring to the community in which you propose to operate?
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Rating	Approaches
<p>The applicant team shared the unique aspects of the model, such as flavors, student choice, standards-based assessment, and shorter seminars. The team described how students choose their courses from a course catalog and that these unique aspects of the school result in greater student engagement, college preparation, and ultimately becoming lifelong learners. However, the applicant team did not identify the <u>most important</u> contribution they thought the proposed school would make to Santa Fe and the surrounding communities.</p>	

Question 3	What does mission success look like?
Rating	Meets
<p>The applicant team said mission success would look like students achieving on formal and informal assessments and the goals in the school’s vision, teacher and student retention, students who are excited to come to school, students engaging with the school’s choice model, and financial sustainability. The team stated that they would know they were successful through student outcome data, student and parent surveys, academic and accountability data that gets shared with the board, and high retention levels year over year.</p>	

Question 4	Describe how the board will provide oversight of your proposed school.
Rating	Meets
<p>The applicant team described the ways the board would oversee and regularly monitor the school’s academic, operational, and financial performance and several metrics they would use to do so.</p>	

Question 5	There are a lot of roles and responsibilities which a district provides to traditional schools. Who will fill those roles at your proposed school?
Rating	Meets
<p>The applicant team acknowledged that a district provides many roles and support structures that charter schools must account for and that, ultimately, it is up to the Head Administrator to ensure everything is completed - whether it be through contracting, delegation, or doing it themselves. The</p>	

team talked about STARS reporting, transportation, food services, maintenance, Ancillary and SPED as examples.

Question 6	How will the proposed school ensure that policies and procedures are not only compliant, but also well implemented, current, and effective?
Rating	Approaches

The response to this question focused primarily on financial policies and procedures. The team also mentioned that the governing council would be responsible for reviewing and updating policies and procedures and that they would take recommendations from the Equity Council in doing so. This answer was scored as “approaches” because of a lack of specificity about what systems would be in place to ensure the Governing Council was regularly reviewing and updating policies and procedures.

Question 7	What will be the responsibilities of the board in reporting to their authorizer?
Rating	Meets

The applicant team said they would be responsible for upholding the terms of their contract with the PEC and notifying the PEC within 30 days of any changes to the terms of the contract, such as changes in Governing Council members. The team also mentioned quarterly budget submissions and responding to audit findings and completing all required paperwork.

Question 8	How does a charter school board ensure the long-term sustainability of the school?
Rating	Meets

The applicant team addressed the need for sound financial practices such as operating with a reserve and adequate cash on hand. The team also described the board’s role in avoiding mission drift and making sure the board is well-trained and that there is a consistent practice of recruiting new board members.

Question 9	Describe the students whose needs your school will serve
Rating	Meets
<p>The applicant team stated that the school would be open to and would serve all students, including special populations such as SPED and EL students. The applicant team also stated that their model includes significant support and differentiation.</p>	

Question 10	What opportunities will your school offer to the community that are not currently available?
Rating	Meets
<p>The applicant team shared that there are currently no k-12 public schools in Santa Fe. They also described the proposed school’s small class sizes, unprecedented amount of choice for students, short seminars, and capstone project, which would be unique compared to other schools in the area.</p>	

Question 11	Describe your vision for engaging students and their families to fully participate in your proposed school
Rating	Meets
<p>The applicant team described several ways students, and their families could engage with the proposed school. Examples mentioned include selecting and registering for courses, community volunteers offering classes and clubs during flex and club time, and weekly progress reports.</p>	

Question 12	Describe your plan for attracting and keeping high-quality teachers. What is your contingency plan if you can’t find the teachers you need to fill all positions?
Rating	Approaches
<p>The applicant team stated that their model is designed to be attractive to teachers, because it relies on teachers to design curriculum for different flavors. The team also described contingency plans to hire long term subs or alternatively certified teachers and provide them training, if necessary. No specific teacher recruitment strategies or plans were mentioned. Earlier in the interview, the</p>	

applicant team also mentioned the specific challenge of Santa Fe’s high cost of living for teachers but did not address how they’d overcome that challenge for the proposed school.

Question 13	How are you going to open your proposed school without federal start-up funds?
Rating	Approaches

The applicant team said that they have experience and confidence in opening a school with or without startup funds. However, much of the response focused on the team’s confidence and hope that they would receive startup funds during their planning year. Some strategies were shared for how the school could start without these funds, such as getting furniture from other schools, carefully budgeting on a month-by-month basis to purchase only the needed supplies, relying on ELS for things like marketing that cannot be delayed, and requesting that some of the prep, such as curriculum design, be done on a volunteer basis. There was a concern about statements made around deferring payments, because of the 30-day timeline to complete payments.

Question 14	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?
Rating	Meets

The applicant team described several metrics they would use to project enrollment on a weekly basis, such as check-ins with families, enrollment numbers, vaccination records and birth certificate submissions, uniform purchases, etc.

Question 15	Suppose your actual enrollment on the first day is 50% below your pre-opening projection. What are your next steps?
Rating	Approaches

The team stated that they would create low, middle, and high enrollment scenario budget plans. However, the team did not share the specific tradeoffs they might make in low enrollment scenarios other than a statement about delaying hiring.

Question 16	Please justify that there is only one Special Education Teacher for the projected 54 Special Education students in Year 1.
Rating	Does Not Meet

The applicant team shared that the SPED teacher in the budget may act more as a program manager and oversee services that are provided by other teachers with SPED licenses. In the event this is the case, the other teachers with SPED licenses should appear in the budget as such. Additionally, even in the event where the 1.0 SPED teacher is overseeing a SPED program and not directly delivering services, it is not feasible that one person should write and oversee 54 IEPs.

Question 17	The budget shows that year over year you are overextended by 2.4 million dollars over 5 years. Explain how you will correct this. Explain how you will adjust even further if you do not meet enrollment projections
Rating	Approaches

The application included a budget in which expenses for Fund 11000 exceeded revenue. The budget writer did include projected revenue from grants; however, the budget writer did not include any expenditures in the grants. Since the budget writer failed to relieve any expenditures from the operating fund (Fund 11000) and move those expenditures into whatever grant they expect to use to pay for those expenditures, it leaves the operating fund (Fund 11000) in a negative state for all 5 years.

Question 18	How will your policies be culturally responsive?
Rating	Approaches

The applicant team stated that they would form an Equity Council quickly after opening and that they would engage the Equity Council to review policies and make recommendations for those policies to be culturally responsive to the community. The applicant team stated a desire to include

diverse perspectives and said that their staff and board would be trained to be Culturally and Linguistically Responsive (CLR). The reason this was scored at "Approaches" was because of a concern that, although the board might be trained in CLR, it doesn't guarantee that policies will be culturally responsive. The response could have been improved by sharing plans for a board that is diverse in professional as well as life experiences and having a plan to ensure CLR training leads to the creation and implementation of culturally responsive policies.

Question 19	Explain how you're going to fund your permanent building without the ability to bond.
Rating	Approaches

This response was scored as "Approaches" because charter schools are not allowed to bond in New Mexico. The other options described by the applicant team (finding an existing school facility or working with a landlord who will renovate and then lease the property) seemed like they'd be particularly challenging in Santa Fe and the team did not seem as if they'd done research to fully explore these options in the proposed area.

Question 20	Explain how Explore Learning Services is not a charter management organization.
Rating	Does Not Meet

The applicant team stated that Explore Learning Services is not a charter management organization because the schools they help open are each independent entities that can ultimately choose not to contract with ELS. This response was scored as "does not meet," because of how closely the plan for this proposed school appears to mirror other Explore schools, including the name. Additionally, the Founding team appears as if they will stay very involved in finance, governance, and academics well beyond simply a supporting role.

Question 21	What is the compelling interest from the community for this school? Share with us additional quantitative data on top of what's in your application.
Rating	Approaches

The applicant team shared data about how many current students (15) of Explore Academy - Albuquerque commute from Santa Fe and its surrounding areas. They also shared that, since completing the initial market research, there have been interactions with prospective families and teachers via social media and via the social and professional networks of the founding team members who live in Santa Fe. The applicant team also stated that it was Santa Fe-area parents who approached Explore Academy - Albuquerque founders about opening a school in Santa Fe.

This response was scored as “Approaches” because of a concern that the 47 interest forms collected during the team’s market research do not represent compelling interest from a district with 12,403 students (not including charter schools).

Additionally, no meetings with Santa Fe Public Schools, City Council or Chamber of Commerce were mentioned (although the application did state that the applicant team had reached out to the Chamber).