Public Charter Schools Grant Program (PCSGP) Application Received from Explore Academy

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Additional details regarding this grant application and its requirements are available at RFA: PCSGP 2024-25 Waiver Entry Start-Up Sub-Grant.

Posted by the California Department of Education on April 25, 2025.

Part 3 – Narrative Response

Question 1. Autonomy and Flexibility

1A. Describe how the autonomy and flexibility granted to your charter school by the authorizer is consistent with the definition of a charter school in ESEA Section 4310(2) (2020 RFA – Rubric Item 1A "Autonomy from Authorizer").

Provide one of the following responses:

☒ By checking this box, the applicant confirms that there are no changes to the plan reviewed and approved by external peer reviewers during a subgrant competition under California's 2020 CSP grant and that the implementation of that plan will continue under the school's new subgrant, if awarded.

or

If the school's plan for ensuring autonomy and flexibility has changed since submission of the school's subgrant application under California's 2020 CSP grant, explain:

1B. Provide Articles of Incorporation and Governing Board By-Laws

Provide one of the following responses:

Provide a copy of the charter school's Articles of Incorporation and Governing Board By-Laws. Identify the page numbers in each document that describe the process for selection and removal of governing board members.

☒ Articles of Incorporation (Include a copy with this application as Attachment A)

Page Numbers: Explore Academy is unable to provide page numbers at this time. A partial copy of the Articles of Incorporation is included as part of the PCSGP Waiver RFA. Explore Academy is working on obtaining the complete document and will provide it as soon as it becomes available.

and

☒ Board By-Laws (Include a copy with this application as Attachment B)

Page Numbers: 4-5; Explore Academy is working to locate the signed copy of the Bylaws and will provide it as soon as it becomes available.

Question 2. Management Organization

PCSGP subgrant awards are made to charter public schools, not any other entity. Regardless of the charter public school's relationship with a management organization, the charter public school and board retain responsibility for all aspects of the subgrant

including, but not limited to application submission, budget decisions, and repayment of any misspent funds. Items purchased by the school with CSP funds are and remain the property of the school, not the management organization. Subgrant applications and budgets may not include any management fees that the school incurs as part of the management contract but may pay for allowable activities carried out by the school or the management organization.

Pursuant to California *Education Code (EC)* Section 47604, a charter school shall not operate as, or be operated by, a for-profit corporation, a for-profit education management organization (EMO), or a for-profit charter management organization (CMO). Operate as, or be operated by, means services provided by a for-profit corporation to a charter school that include:

a. Nominating, appointing, or removing board members or officers of the charter school.

b. Employing, supervising, or dismissing employees of the charter school, including certificated and noncertificated school personnel.

c. Managing the charter school's day-to-day operations as its administrative manager.

d. Approving, denying, or managing the budget or any expenditures of the charter school that are not authorized by the governing body of the charter school.

e. Providing services to a charter school before the governing body of the charter school has approved the contract for those services at a publicly noticed meeting.

Any applicant which does not meet the requirements above will not be eligible for funding. As a general matter, subgrantees must avoid apparent and actual conflicts of interest when administering grants.

Schools choosing to engage a nonprofit educational service provider (ESP) or EMO or CMO must demonstrate that they and their governing boards are independent of the provider, and that all fees and agreements are fair and reasonable. The ESP, EMO or CMO does not qualify as an eligible applicant, nor may it hold or manage a subgrant awarded to a school. Schools must exercise special care to ensure that a direct representative of the applicant school, independent of the ESP, EMO or CMO, is identified to administer the grant, as required per 34 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 74.40-48, 75.524-525, and 80.36. Contracts between schools and ESPs will be subject to review as part of the application and eligibility processes per ESEA Section 4303 (f)(1)(C)(i)(I).

2A. Describe the level of autonomy your charter school has from the CMO or non-profit operating multiple schools under one governing board (2020 RFA – Rubric Item 1B "Autonomy from CMO or non-profit operating multiple schools under one governing board")

Provide one of the following responses:

☐ By checking this box, the applicant confirms that the school did not include Rubric Item 1B in its original PCSGP application because:

1. The applicant school is not affiliated with a CMO, and

2. The applicant school is the only school managed by the non-profit organization

or

☐ By checking this box, the applicant confirms that there are no changes to the autonomy from the CMO or non-profit description reviewed and approved by external peer reviewers during a subgrant competition under California's 2020 CSP grant and that the implementation of that plan will continue under the school's new subgrant, if awarded.

or

If the autonomy from the CMO or non-profit varies since submission of the school's subgrant application under California's 2020 CSP grant, explain: Explore Academy has terminated the agreement with the CMO (Explore Learning Systems, or ELS) that was listed in the original PCSGP grant application (California's 2020 CSP grant) in January, 2023. Explore Academy does not work with a CMO, and as an independent charter school governed by an independent, incorporated nonprofit Board of Directors, Explore Academy maintains absolute autonomy over all board level decisions and policy-making.

2B. Describe Management Organization Affiliations

Provide all applicable responses.

2Bi. Does the charter school work with a CMO, EMO, or ESP? Mark all applicable statements below:

☐ Yes, CMO(s)

☐ Yes, EMO(s)

☐ Yes, ESP(s)

☒ No

2Bii. If the charter school works with CMOs, EMOs, or ESPs, identify each entity's:

Legal name:

Employer Identification Number (EIN):

Addresses of all offices:

Status of the entity as non-profit or for-profit:

2Biii. Provide a copy or description of any contract executed for each CMO, EMO, or ESP identified above including the name and contact information; the cost (i.e., fixed costs and estimates of any ongoing costs or fees), **including the amount of PCSGP funds proposed to be used toward such cost,** and the percentage such cost represents of the school's overall funding; the duration of the contract; roles and responsibilities of the management organization; and steps the applicant will take to ensure that it pays fair market value for any services or other items purchased or leased from the management organization, makes all programmatic decisions, maintains control over all PCSGP funds, and directly administers or supervises the administration of the grant in accordance with 34 CFR 75.701. (Include a copy or description of each contract with this application as Attachment C)

2C. Management Organizations – Business or Financial Relationships

Required for applicants who responded "Yes" to working with any CMO, EMO, or ESP in Question 2Bi.

Describe any business or financial relationship between the charter school developer/founding group and the management organization, including payments, contract terms, and any property owned, operated, or controlled by the management organization or related individuals or entities that will be used by the charter school.

2D. Management Organizations – Conflicts of Interest

Required for applicants who responded "Yes" to working with any CMO, EMO, or ESP in Question 2Bi.

Provide the name and contact information for each member of the governing board of the charter school and a list of the management organization's officers, chief administrator, or other administrators, and any staff involved in approving or executing the management contract; and a description of any actual or perceived conflicts of interest, including financial interests, and how the applicant will resolve any actual or perceived conflicts of interest to ensure compliance with 2 CFR 200.318(c).

2E. Management Organizations – Governance Autonomy

Required for applicants who responded "Yes" to working with any CMO, EMO, or ESP in Question 2Bi.

Describe how the applicant will ensure that members of the governing board of the charter school are not selected, removed, controlled, or employed by the management organization and that the charter school's legal, accounting, and auditing services will be procured independently from the management organization.

2F. Student Records

Describe the steps the applicant will take to ensure that it maintains control over all student records and has a process in place to provide those records to another public school or school district in a timely manner upon the transfer of a student from the charter school to another public school, including due to closure of the charter school, in accordance with section 4308 of the ESEA (2020 RFA – Rubric Item 3D "Student Record Retention and Transfer Process").

Provide one of the following responses.

☒ By checking this box, the applicant confirms that there are no changes to the plan reviewed and approved by external peer reviewers during a subgrant competition under California's 2020 CSP grant and that the implementation of that plan will continue under the school's new subgrant, if awarded.

or

If the student record retention and transfer process varies from the previously-approved plan, explain:

Question 3. Fiscal Sustainability

Describe how your charter school will maintain financial sustainability after the end of the subgrant period (2020 RFA – Rubric Item 1I "Capacity Building").

Provide one of the following responses.

☒ By checking this box, the applicant confirms that there are no changes to the plan reviewed and approved by external peer reviewers during a subgrant competition under California's 2020 CSP grant and that the implementation of that plan will continue under the school's new subgrant, if awarded.

or

If the financial sustainability plan varies since submission of the school's subgrant application under California's 2020 CSP grant, explain:

Question 4. Conditions of Learning

Required for all applicants.

Describe how the charter school will meet the educational needs of its students, including "children with disabilities" and English learners:

Meeting the Needs of All Students

Explore Academy's innovative choice-based educational program is rooted in evidence based learning strategies that are proven to meet the needs of all students, including children (students) with disabilities and English Learners. This educational program offers an original and systemic form of individualized instruction so that all students are able to access the curriculum and improve academic success through thematic "seminars" that are aligned to Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and English Language Development (ELD) standards. The seminar format represents a student-driven approach to learning, as students choose the theme or "flavor" of how they are learning. Because students are allowed to choose how they learn and ultimately how they will fulfill their academic requirements, Explore Academy is able to meet the needs of all learners through students' interests.

The "flavored" seminars each have their own theme and unique approach to the assigned academic standards. This offers students almost endless course options. For example, a science course that covers the physical science standards of forces and motion, may be offered to students through multiple "flavored" seminars:

• Example 1- "A Day at the Amusement Park" Using examples from some of the most extreme amusement park rides from around the planet, students study the forces playing on the riders' bodies through the twist, turns, dips, and dives.

• Example 2- "3, 2, 1, Blast-Off!" Students study forces through space travel, incorporating escape velocities, gravitational pull, satellites and orbits, interstellar travel, and zero gravity environments.

Both examples of "flavors" cover the same academic standards and learning targets for the seminar; how the standards are covered makes it unique. With educational options, personal interest and consistent engagement, students become invested in their work, apply what they've learned, retain that knowledge over the long term, and ensures each students' needs are met.

Technology plays a key role in Explore Academy's instructional program to ensure all students understand and engage in learning that meets their individualized needs. Each classroom is equipped with state-of-the-art technology to enhance instruction, including Chromebooks, headphones, printers, document cameras and projectors to provide high-quality instruction. Students also have access to educational applications and software including: NearPod, Co-Writer, Snap-and-Read, Pear Deck, Google Classroom, Google Apps Google Extensions, and Zoom. Devices allow for access to

classroom, school, and State assessments including interim and progress monitoring assessments, such as iReady. Technology is also used for language support such as dictionaries, translation software, text to speech, and note taking ensuring students have equitable access to grade level content and learning.

Explore Academy tracks student progress and academic achievement through measures that generate data from the beginning to the end of the year to ensure the needs of its students are met. This process includes assessing children with disabilities and English Learners. Explore Academy utilizes the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) process that integrates assessment and intervention to maximize student achievement. MTSS is a system of support that provides teachers' with a collaborative, school-wide method to identify struggling students and provide appropriate interventions beyond classroom instruction, such as after-school tutoring and individual counseling. Assessments used include formal assessments such as CAASPP testing, the interim assessment, ELPAC as well as informal assessments such as writing prompts, rubrics, portfolios, end of chapter tests and quizzes, project-based assignments, and check-in conversations. Local benchmark assessments, such as iReady, is administered three times during the school year. Explore Academy utilizes local benchmark assessment tools as part of its goal to identify students not attaining standards and ensuring inventions are provided in an individualized manner so that the needs of all students are met.

Instructional staff collect assessment data, particularly data for subgroups, and engage in critical analysis. Data equips teachers with knowledge on the performance of individual students and of subgroups. The data collected allows teachers, administration and special education/English Learner case managers to monitor each student and respond quickly to any issues that may arise. Based on the data, teachers are able to evaluate their lessons and instructional strategies for effectiveness, adjust instruction as needed, and develop evidence-based differentiated lessons to meet the needs of all students. Once students who are at-risk for poor learning outcomes are identified, evidence-based interventions are administered adjusting the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on students' responsiveness. Interventions may include: in-class interventions, extended learning, counseling, tutoring, and school-sponsored help sessions. An instructional team monitors and analyzes data to maintain a problem-solving system that brings out the best in the school, teachers, and students.

Individual conferences are held with parents to review both student performance and assessment data, as part of Explore Academy's holistic approach to improve instruction and learning. If a students' performance is below target (not making adequate progress), the parent/guardian will be advised in a special conference and intervention strategies will be communicated. If a student's performance is on target for their immediate stage of development, the parent will be advised. This collaborative effort among teachers, students and parents empowers students to take ownership of their growth and development and create a positive and practical format for parents to have a voice in their children's education. This constant monitoring and communication related to student progress also ensures that students have their needs met in all classes consistently, creating a safe and stable educational environment.

Meeting the Needs of Children with Disabilities

Explore Academy complies with all applicable Federal and State laws in serving students with disabilities and ensuring their needs are met. Explore Academy has membership in the El Dorado County Charter SELPA in conformity with Ed Code Section 47641(a) for purposes of providing special education instruction and related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act and applicable policies and practices of the SELPA. Explore Academy may seek resources and services (e.g. Speech, Occupational Therapy, Adapted P.E., Nursing, and Transportation) from the SELPA, subject to SELPA approval and availability. Explore Academy may provide related services by hiring credentialed or licensed providers through private agencies or independent contractors.

All students with disabilities residing in the community who are in need of special education and related services are identified, located and evaluated, regardless of the severity of their disabilities. Explore Academy utilizes SELPA child-find procedures to identify all students who may require assessment to consider special education eligibility and related services. Explore Academy implement the MTSS framework prior to referring a child for an evaluation under IDEA but ensures that child-find identification occurs in a timely manner and that no procedures or practices result in delaying or denying this identification. An IEP or 504 plan is developed, reviewed and revised for each child with a disability who requires special education and related services. Student IEPs require varied kinds of accommodations and modifications for instruction and services based on students' needs. If a students' IEP team determines that the student requires placement outside of a general education classroom, Explore Academy will provide the necessary placement and/or services. IEP reviews are conducted on an annual basis to assess student progress and appropriate revisions are made. Explore Academy ensures appropriately-credentialed special education service providers are hired to further assist children with disabilities. Since all teachers, administrators, and appropriate staff need to ensure that the IEP and any possible 504 plans are properly implemented, PD/training are provided to comply with Federal and State special education laws.

In order to ensure the needs of children with disabilities are met, Progress Towards Goals (PTG) is a component of the students' IEP. PTG are specific goals identified by the IEP team which becomes an explicit benchmark on measuring student growth. While the common practice is to measure PTG once per year, Explore Academy teachers review and provide feedback on special education goals each month, thus creating a more precise and workable data set from which the special education staff can operate in supporting students for the term ahead. This data is compiled and added into an existing report that is shared with parents for review on an ongoing basis.

Meeting the Needs of English Learners

Explore Academy follows all applicable laws in serving English Learners as they pertain to annual notification, student identification, placement, program options, EL and core content instruction, teacher qualifications and training, reclassification to fluent English

proficient status, monitoring and evaluating program effectiveness, and standardized testing requirements. Explore Academy provides a high-quality English Language Development (ELD) instructional program that enables English Learners to attain English proficiency, achievement in all academic subject areas, and have full access to a range of educational opportunities available to all students.

Explore Academy provides an inclusive, integrated ELD program. The curriculum is aligned to the ELD standards as well as CCSS for English Language Arts/Literacy and other core content. Additionally, English Learners participate in designated ELD during flex periods. Flex periods are additional structured time periods where students can participate in activities such as intervention, enrichment activities, support services, and tutoring. The flex period provides built-in time for designated ELD when English Learners benefit from a focused language development that builds academic language, including the vocabulary and structure that builds fluency.

Teachers of English Learners implement Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) methodology which is a set of specific strategies designed to make instruction comprehensible and grade-level academic content accessible for English Learners ensuring the needs of these students are met. SDAIE strategies may include visuals, graphic organizers, technology-based language development, and interactive communication. This support enabled English Learners to develop the grammatical framework and vocabulary needed to become proficient readers and writers. Teachers participate in PD to implement teaching methods to support English Learners in order to provide the most equitable learning environment for students whose academic language usage does not yet match their content knowledge or grade level.

Explore Academy retain Cross-cultural, Language, and Academic Development (CLAD) certified teachers who work with the classroom teachers and English Learners ensuring that these students are meeting or making progress toward achieving the state ELD standards. The ELD teachers also go into "favored" seminars with English Learners when push-in support is beneficial or necessary to provide equitable access to content instruction. This can include assisting English Learners in completing a lab, teaching alongside the general education teacher to provide English Learners specific accommodations in real time, or working in small groups with several English Learners in the seminar as they complete their assignment for the day. This additional layer of student ensures the needs of English Learners are met.

Question 5. Input from Parents and Community

Describe how the eligible applicant will solicit and consider input from parents and other members of the community on the implementation and operation of each charter school that will receive funds under the SE's program. (2020 RFA – Rubric Item 5A "Parent and Community Involvement")

Provide one of the following responses.

☒ By checking this box, the applicant confirms that there are no changes to the plan reviewed and approved by external peer reviewers during a subgrant competition under California's 2020 CSP grant and that the implementation of that plan will continue under the school's new subgrant, if awarded.

or

If the parent and community involvement plan will vary since submission of the school's subgrant application under California's 2020 CSP grant, explain:

Question 6. Effective Engagement Strategies

Required for all applicants.

Describe how the charter school will support the use of effective parent, family, and community engagement strategies to operate each charter school that will receive funding:

1. Inclusive Communication Channels:

The school will prioritize transparent and consistent communication with parents and families. Strategies include:

- Establishing a bilingual communication system (newsletters, websites, mobile apps) to ensure accessibility for non-English-speaking families.

- Hosting regular town halls, parent-teacher conferences, and community forums to foster dialogue and provide updates on school goals and progress.

- Using social media and messaging platforms for real-time updates and event notifications.

2. Parent Empowerment Programs:

To actively involve parents in the educational process, the school will offer:

- Workshops include supporting learning at home, college readiness, and understanding curriculum standards.

-Training sessions to equip parents with tools to advocate for their children's education effectively.

-Opportunities for parents to volunteer in classrooms, extracurricular activities, or school committees.

3. Community Partnerships:

The charter school will collaborate with local organizations to strengthen the support system for students and families. Examples include:

Partnering with businesses for mentorship programs, internships, or career days.

Collaborating with local nonprofits to provide family resources such as food assistance, healthcare, and counseling services.

Working with community centers and libraries to host educational events and extracurricular activities.

4. Family-Centered Policies and Practices:

The school will ensure that its policies reflect a family-friendly environment by:

Providing flexible scheduling for parent-teacher meetings to accommodate working families.

Offering child care during school events to encourage attendance.

Creating a Parent Advisory Council to involve families in decision-making processes.

5. Celebrating Diversity and Inclusion:

To foster a sense of belonging among families, the school will:

Host multicultural events and festivals to celebrate the diverse backgrounds of the community.

Include diverse voices in curriculum planning and extracurricular activities.

Develop culturally responsive teaching practices and policies that respect and reflect the community's unique needs.

6. Continuous Feedback Mechanisms:

The school will regularly collect input from parents and families through:

Surveys, focus groups, and suggestion boxes to understand their needs and expectations.

Annual reviews of engagement strategies to assess effectiveness and adapt based on feedback.

An open-door policy for parents to discuss concerns and suggestions with school leadership

Question 7. Student Discipline

Required for all applicants.

Describe the school's student discipline practices:

Explore Academy has adopted a School Safety Plan, which includes identification of appropriate strategies and programs that provide or maintain a high level of school safety and address the Charter School's procedures for complying with applicable laws related to school safety, including the development of all of the safety topics listed in subparagraphs (A) to (J), inclusive, of paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) of EC Section 32282. All staff are trained on this plan. The School Safety Plan is reviewed and updated by March 1 of each year by Explore Academy. All stakeholder have access to the School Safety Plan.

Explore Academy places a strong importance on personal responsibility, respect, accountability, and commitment to mature and professional behavior. Therefore, student discipline procedures and practices focus on promoting a positive learning environment and protecting the safety and well-being of all members of the school community. The student discipline policies/practices, including Explore Academy's suspension and expulsion policy and procedures, are printed and distributed annually as part of the Student and Family Handbook. The policy is also available upon request at the main office. Administration ensures that students and their parents/guardians are notified in writing upon enrollment of all student discipline and involuntary removal policies, practices and procedures. Teachers actively engage students in learning the student discipline policy, practices and behavior expectations at the beginning and throughout the school year. Explore Academy's staff enforce disciplinary policies and procedures fairly and consistently among all students.

Explore Academy's suspension and expulsion policy and procedures were developed utilizing EC Section 48900 which describes the offenses for which students at non-charter schools may be suspended or expelled and the procedures governing those suspensions and expulsions. This EC allowed Explore Academy to create its list of offenses and procedures for suspensions, expulsions, and involuntary removal. A student may be suspended or expelled for prohibited misconduct if the act is related to school activity or school attendance occurring at any time including but not limited to: a) while on school grounds; b) while going to or coming from school; c) during the lunch period, whether on or off the school campus; or d) during, going to, or coming from a school-sponsored activity. Corporal punishment will not be used as a disciplinary measure against any student. Corporal punishment includes the willful infliction of or willfully causing the infliction of physical pain on a student.

A student identified as an individual with disabilities or for whom Explore Academy has a basis of knowledge of a suspected disability pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 ("IDEA") or who is qualified for services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ("Section 504") is subject to the same grounds for suspension and expulsion and is accorded the same due process

procedures applicable to general education students except when Federal and State law mandates additional or different procedures. Explore Academy follows all applicable Federal and State laws including but not limited to the applicable provisions of the California Education Code, when imposing any form of discipline on a student identified as an individual with disabilities or for whom Explore Academy has a basis of knowledge of a suspected disability or who is otherwise qualified for such services or protections according to due process to such students.

No student will be involuntarily removed by Explore Academy for any reason unless the parent/guardian of the student has been provided written notice of intent to remove the student no less than five (5) schooldays before the effective date of the action. The written notice will be in the native language of the student or the students' parent/guardian, or if the student is a foster child or youth or a homeless child or youth, the students' educational rights holder, and will inform the student, the students' parent/guardian, or educational rights holder of the basis for which the student is being involuntarily removed and the student's parent/guardian, or educational rights holder's right to request a hearing to challenge the involuntary removal. If a students' parent, guardian, or educational rights holder requests a hearing, Explore Academy will utilize the same hearing procedures specified in the suspension and expulsion policy for expulsions, before the effective date of the action to involuntarily remove the student. If the students' parent, guardian, or educational rights holder requests a hearing, the student will remain enrolled and will not be removed until Explore Academy issues a final decision. For purposes of this clause, "involuntarily removed" includes disenrolled, dismissed, transferred, or terminated, but does not removals for misconduct which may be grounds for suspension or expulsion as enumerated in the charter petition.

Explore Academy uses Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) to identify and support students with both academic and behavioral issues. MTSS uses four components to address behavioral issues: screening, progress monitoring, a multi-level (or tiered) prevention system, and data based decision-making. MTSS' tier model aligns with Explore Academy's overall approach to instruction, since teachers integrate whole-group, small-group and individualized instruction into daily lesson plans. The MTSS tiers include: Tier 1–all students are taught with methods that research has shown to be effective; Tier 2–those students who are not responding to strategies receive more targeted support in small groups; and Tier 3–individualized and intensive support. MTSS allows school leaders to monitor student progress for meeting behavior expectations and plan interventions to address behavior issues as part of the student discipline practices. Parents/guardians are also involved in the program, so they can understand the interventions and provide support at home. The data driven practices of MTSS improve student outcomes by increasing academic achievement, lowers suspension and expulsion rates, and creates a safe school campus.

Explore Academy distributes a stakeholder survey annually (in English and Spanish) to parents, teachers, and students reflecting on student discipline practices and whether behavioral intervention strategies implemented at the school are effective. Explore Academy seeks to gather information on whether families feel safe while in school. The

results of the survey are analyzed by administration and serve as one tool for making informed decisions about student discipline practices, policies and procedures.

Question 8. Lottery and Waitlist Policies and Procedures

PCSGP subgrantees must meet all requirements of the federal definition of a "charter school" including ESEA 4310(2) that the charter school is a school to which parents choose to send their children, and that—

> (i) Admits students on the basis of a lottery, consistent with section 4303(c)(3)(A) of the ESEA, if more students apply for admission than can be accommodated; or (ii) In the case of a school that has an affiliated charter school (such as a school that is part of the same network of schools), automatically enrolls students who are enrolled in the immediate prior grade level of the affiliated charter school and, for any additional student openings or student openings created through regular attrition in student enrollment in the affiliated charter school and the enrolling school, admits students on the basis of a lottery as described in paragraph (i).

8A. Recruitment, Enrollment, Admissions, and Waitlist Practices

Required for all applicants.

Describe the charter school's lottery and waitlist policy and procedures to ensure compliance with state and federal law, including:

a. Recruitment practices: Explore Academy will achieve a balance of racial and ethnic pupils, special education pupils, and English learner pupils, including redesignated fluent English proficient pupils, as defined by the evaluation rubrics in Section 52064.5, that is reflective of the general population residing within the territorial jurisdiction of the Orange County Department of Education. Explore Academy will strive to ensure that the school reflects and embraces the diversity of Orange County. To accomplish this, the school will engage in recruitment efforts that include maintaining a student demographic data to ensure accurate accounting of racial and ethnic balance of students enrolled in the school, develop promotional and informational material (flyers, brochures, applications, and other recruitment materials) in both English and Spanish, and distribute bilingual promotional and informational materials to a broad variety of community groups including local preschool parent groups, Head Start parents, parks & recreational departments, public libraries, and outreach meetings held in a variety of local neighborhoods. Explore will use various distribution channels to enable public relations efforts to reach a wide audience, including community presentations, flyers, the school website, social media, and press releases to the local media. Explore Academy will utilize its website to provide information about the school's instructional model, student registration, upcoming meetings, teachers, staff and

administration, the Board of Directors. Additionally, applicable information on the website will be provided in Spanish as applicable.

b. Enrollment practices: As a countywide-benefit charter school, all students will have an equal opportunity to attend Explore Academy. Explore Academy ensures that all policies comply with CA Ed Code Section 47605(d)(2)(A), 47605(d)(2)(B) and with all applicable Federal/State laws regarding open admission and public lottery requirements. Explore Academy does not discriminate on the basis of the characteristics listed in Section 220 (actual or perceived disability, gender, gender expression, gender identity, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in Section 422.55 of the Penal Code, including immigration status, or association with an individual who has any of the aforementioned characteristics). In order for a student to be admitted to Explore Academy parents/guardians of the student are encouraged to attend an enrollment/orientation meeting, (meetings will be scheduled at a variety of times to meet the needs of all parents) and submit a form with basic contact information. Before the first day of school, parents/guardians need to submit (a) enrollment forms (b) proof of immunizations (c) home language survey (d) emergency medical information form (e) proof of age requirements (f) release of records. Applications for admission will be accepted during the open enrollment/orientation period from approximately January through March. Upon receipt of an application, it will be numbered and stamped with the date and time. At the end of the open enrollment period, all applications for admission will be counted by the Executive Director or designee to determine if there are sufficient applications to fill vacant seats per grade. If the Executive Director or designee discovers that there are more applications than available capacity, a public random drawing will be held. After the determination to hold a public random drawing, a date will be selected after the end of the open enrollment period. The public random drawing will typically be held during the last week of March, unless it conflicts with the Charter School's Spring Break, in which case the public random drawing will be held after Spring Break. The Charter School will send a letter to all applicants in the grade level or class that has been determined to require a public random drawing no later than seven days before the drawing date. The letter will state the date, time, and location of the public random drawing as well as other arrangements made by the Charter School such as childcare or parking, and contact information. This information will also be published on the Charter School's website. All public random drawings will take place on the Charter School grounds.

c. Admissions practices, including lottery preferences and projected timeline for conducting a lottery: Admission into Explore Academy is not determined by the place of residence of the pupil or his/her legal guardian within the state, and does not require mandatory parental volunteer hours or a test or assessment prior acceptance. Preference groups will PCSGP Start-Up Sub-Grant Application Packet 2021–23 Explore Academy Page 40 of 67 include siblings of students admitted to or attending Explore Academy and pupils who

reside in Orange County; these preferences are consistent with Ed Code Section 47605(d)(2), applicable Federal law, the CA Constitution, and Section 200. Currently enrolled students will be exempt from the public random drawing. Preferences will not result in limiting enrollment access for any pupils. Explore Academy complies with Ed Code 49700 which provides for the timely enrollment of children of military families and ensuring that they are not placed at a disadvantage due to difficulty in the transfer of educational records or various entrance/age requirements. Applications for admission will be accepted during the open enrollment/orientation period from approximately January through March. Applications are numbered and dated at the time of receipt. At the end of the open enrollment period, all applications are counted by the ED to determine if there are sufficient applications to fill vacant seats per grade. If there are more applications than available seats, a public random drawing will be held in stages according to the following preference groups: 1. Siblings of students admitted to or attending Explore Academy; and 2. Pupils who reside in Orange County. The public random drawing will typically be held during the last week of March. Explore Academy will notify all applicants in the grade level requiring a public random drawing no later than seven days before the drawing date. The letter will state the date, time, and location of the public random drawing. Lottery information will also be posted on the school's website. All public random drawings will take place on school grounds.

d. Waitlist practices, including how and when students are offered seats if they become available: Lottery spaces will be pulled in order of grade level by the designated lottery official (appointed by the ED). Separate lotteries shall be conducted for each grade in which there are fewer vacancies than pupils interested in attending. Lotteries will be conducted in ascending order beginning with the lowest applicable grade level. There is no weighted priority assigned to the preference categories; rather, within each grade level, students will be drawn from pools beginning with all applicants who qualify for the first preference category, and shall continue with that preference category until all vacancies within that grade level have been filled. If there are more students in a preference category than there are spaces available, a random drawing will be held from within that preference category until all available spaces are filled. If all students from the preference category have been selected and there are remaining spaces available in that grade level, students from the second preference category will be drawn in the lottery, and the drawing will continue until all spaces are filled and preference categories are exhausted in the order provided above. When student seats for each grade are filled, names will continue to be drawn to create an orderly waiting list of students to be called upon when a vacancy occurs. If a vacancy occurs, Explore Academy will notify the parent/guardian by phone and letter and provide the parents with 72 hours to enroll the student. If the parent does not contact the school to accept the position for their student within this period, Explore Academy will contact the parent of the next student on the wait-list for that grade level. Explore Academy will maintain copies of documents relating

to the lottery on file for one academic year to demonstrate the fair execution of lottery procedures.

8B. Enrollment Preferences or Lottery Exemption Assurances

CSP Nonregulatory Guidance (January 2014) allows for the following categories of enrollment preferences or lottery exemptions:

1. Students who are enrolled in a public school at the time it is converted into a public charter school;

2. Students who are eligible to attend, and are living in the attendance area of, a public school at the time it is converted into a public charter school;

3. Siblings of students already admitted to or attending the same charter school;

4. Children of a charter school's founders, teachers, and staff (so long as the total number of students allowed under this exemption constitutes only a small percentage of the school's total enrollment); or

5. Children of employees in a work-site charter school, (so long as the total number of students allowed under this exemption constitutes only a small percentage of the school's total enrollment).

ESEA 4310(2)(H)(ii) additionally allows for the following enrollment preference or lottery exemption:
1. Students who are enrolled in the immediate prior grade level of the affiliated charter school (such as a school that is part of the same charter school network).

California state law allows the following enrollment preferences or lottery exemptions:
1. Locally and State Board of Education authorized charter schools must comply with *EC* Section 47605(e)(2)(B) which states that "preference shall be extended to pupils currently attending the charter school and pupils who reside in the school district."
2. Charter schools authorized as a countywide benefit charter must comply with *EC* 47605.6(e)(2)(B) which states that "preference shall be extended to pupils currently attending the charter school and pupils who reside in the county."

Per CSP Nonregulatory Guidance (January 2014), "Weighted lotteries (i.e., lotteries that give additional weight to individual students who are identified as part of a specified set of students, but do not reserve or set aside seats for individual students or sets of students) are permitted only in certain circumstances." Under this RFA, PCSGP subgrantees may not implement weighted lottery categories without prior approval by the U.S. Department of Education.

Provide one of the following responses.

☒ By checking this box, the applicant confirms that the school's authorizer-approved enrollment preference, lottery exemption, and weighted lottery categories only include the categories described above in compliance with CSP Nonregulatory Guidance (January 2014), *ESEA 4310(2)(H)(ii),* or *EC* section 47605(e)(2)(B) or 47605.6(a)(2)(B).

or

Lottery Assurances (Include a copy or description of each contract with this application as Attachment D): If the school's authorizer-approved enrollment preferences, lottery exemptions, or weighted lottery include categories which are not included above, provide the following assurance and information on the charter school's letterhead, signed by the charter school administrator:

[Name of charter school] will implement only enrollment preference, lottery exemption, and weighted lottery categories that are compliant with CSP Nonregulatory Guidance (January 2014), ESEA 4310(2)(H)(ii), and EC section 47605(e)(2)(B) or 47605.6(a)(2)(B) for the term of the PCSGP subgrant.

The school proposes the following timeline and/or schedule for its 2024−25 lottery:

Question 9. Needs Analysis

Describe how the proposed project would serve the interests and meet the needs of students and families in the communities the charter school intends to serve. The needs analysis, which may consist of information and documents previously submitted to an authorized public chartering agency to address need, must include, but is not necessarily limited to, the following:

Required for all applicants.

9A. Describe the local community support, including information that demonstrates interest in, and need for, the charter school; benefits to the community; and other evidence of demand for the charter school that demonstrates a strong likelihood the charter school will achieve and maintain its enrollment projections. Such information may include information on waiting lists for the proposed charter school or existing charter schools or traditional public schools; data on access to seats in high-quality public schools in the districts from which the charter school expects to draw students; and family interest in specialized instructional approaches proposed to be implemented at the charter school:

Enrollment Growth:

Explore Academy has experienced steady growth and high retention rates, reflecting its appeal and effectiveness as a charter school:

- The school opened with 123 students on its first day and has grown to 128.

- Retention rates are exceptionally high, with students leaving primarily due to family relocations rather than dissatisfaction with the school.

Family Feedback:

Feedback from parents and students underscores strong satisfaction with Explore Academy's educational approach and impact:

- Surveys reveal a 4/5 average rating from parents and a 4.5/5 rating from students, demonstrating high levels of approval and confidence in the school.

- Positive testimonials frequently highlight the school's personalized learning environment and student-centered approach.

Community Support and Demand:

Explore Academy has garnered significant community interest, underscoring the need for its innovative educational model:

- Strong local demand exists for the school's specialized instructional methods, such as competency-based learning and individualized academic pathways.

- Waiting lists for Explore Academy and neighboring charter schools reflect an unmet demand for high-quality educational options in the area.

- Families in the region have expressed enthusiasm for the school's unique offerings, reinforcing their belief in its value to the community.

The broader community also demonstrates support:

- Explore Academy is an active Orange Chamber of Commerce member, fostering relationships with local businesses and organizations.

- Community partnerships and outreach initiatives have further solidified Explore Academy's role as a vital educational resource in the area.

Limited Access to High-Quality Public Schools:

Explore Academy meets a critical need in the community by addressing gaps in access to quality education:

- Many families face limited options for high-quality public schools, prompting them to seek alternatives like Explore Academy.

- Enrollment trends reflect this demand, as parents prioritize schools offering rigorous academics and personalized learning experiences.

Facilities and Lease:

- Explore Academy has secured approval to extend its facilities lease through the 2025-2026 school year to accommodate its growth and ensure stability, demonstrating a commitment to long-term success and community impact.

Evidence of Strong Likelihood of Enrollment Success:

Explore Academy's ability to meet and maintain enrollment projections is supported by robust evidence:

- Positive family feedback, steady growth, and high retention rates showcase the school's effectiveness and community value.

- Local data on school capacity highlights a clear need for more high-quality educational options, validating Explore Academy's role in fulfilling this demand

9B. Provide information on the proposed charter school's projected student enrollment, and evidence to support the projected enrollment based on the needs analysis and other relevant data and factors, such as the methodology and calculations used:

Enrollment Goal:

Explore Academy aims to increase its enrollment to approximately 170 students by the 2025-2026 school year. This target reflects a commitment to expanding access to high-quality educational opportunities while maintaining strong student outcomes and satisfaction.

Management Company Partnership:

To achieve this ambitious goal, Explore Academy has partnered with a management company, effective December 1, to enhance and support enrollment efforts. This collaboration provides access to additional expertise and resources, ensuring the school can effectively implement strategies to attract and retain students.

Website Improvements:

Explore Academy has recently made significant updates to its school website to engage prospective families better and communicate the school's unique offerings. The enhanced website is a critical tool for increasing visibility and providing clear, accessible information to interested families.

Recruitment and Retention Plan:

The school is preparing a comprehensive recruitment and retention plan, set to be presented to the board in January 2025. This plan will outline specific strategies and actionable targets, ensuring sustained enrollment growth and strong retention rates over time.

Evidence Supporting Projected Enrollment:

Explore Academy's projected enrollment of 170 students is grounded in a robust needs analysis and supported by relevant data:

Community Demand: There is a growing need for high-quality educational options in the area, as demonstrated by strong local interest and waiting lists at Explore Academy and neighboring schools.

- Family Feedback: Surveys indicate strong satisfaction among current families, with consistently high ratings from parents and students.

- Current Enrollment Trends: Enrollment has grown from 123 students at opening to 128 students, reflecting steady growth and demand for the school's offerings.

- Retention Rates: Explore Academy has maintained positive retention rates, with students leaving primarily due to relocation rather than dissatisfaction.

Data-Driven Methodology:

The school's enrollment projections are informed by a data-driven methodology:

- Survey Feedback: Family surveys consistently highlight satisfaction with Explore Academy's educational approach, reinforcing the likelihood of continued growth.

- Community Involvement: Active participation in the Orange Chamber of Commerce and other local initiatives underscores strong community support and engagement.

- Trend Analysis: Explore Academy is well-positioned to meet its enrollment goals for the 2025-2026 school year by analyzing current enrollment patterns and local demand.

9C. An analysis of the proposed charter school's projected student demographics and a description of the demographics of students attending public schools in the local community in which the charter school would be located and the school districts from which the students are, or would be, drawn to attend the charter school; a description of how the applicant plans to establish and maintain a racially and socio-economically diverse student body, including proposed strategies (that are consistent with applicable legal requirements) to recruit, admit, enroll, and retain a diverse student body. An applicant that is unlikely to establish and maintain a racially and socio-economically diverse student body at the proposed charter school because the charter school would be located in a racially or socio-economically segregated or isolated community, or due to the charter school's specific education mission, must describe:

> 9Ci. Why it is unlikely to be able to establish and maintain a racially and socio-economically diverse student body at the proposed charter school:

Explore Academy is committed to providing all students with an inclusive and equitable education. Based on a comprehensive review of the local community demographics and data from surrounding public schools, we project that our student body will reflect a diverse range of backgrounds, including students from various racial, ethnic, and socio-economic groups.

In the community where Explore Academy is located and in the public school districts from which we will draw students, the demographics are as follows:

- Racial and Ethnic Diversity: The local community includes a mix of racial and ethnic groups, with a significant portion of students from Hispanic/Latino, African American, Asian, and White backgrounds. We plan to ensure that our student body mirrors this diversity.

- Socio-Economic Diversity: The surrounding area includes neighborhoods with a mix of socio-economic levels, ranging from low-income to middle-class families. Many families in the area qualify for free or reduced-price lunch programs, which speaks to the need for affordable, high-quality educational options.

To create a racially and socio-economically diverse student body, Explore Academy has developed the following strategies:

1. Inclusive Recruitment Practices:

- Community Outreach: We will engage in extensive outreach to communities with diverse racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. This includes hosting informational sessions at local community centers, churches, and events to ensure we are reaching families from all neighborhoods.

- Multiple Language Materials: To ensure accessibility, all recruitment and enrollment materials will be available in multiple languages, including English and Spanish, and will be distributed in both print and online formats. We will also provide support in other languages as needed to accommodate families from various linguistic backgrounds.

- Collaboration with Community Organizations: We will partner with local organizations that serve underserved communities to help promote the school's offerings and to recruit a diverse group of students. These partnerships will ensure families from low-income backgrounds, including English learners and students with disabilities, are informed about Explore Academy's enrollment opportunities.

2. Non-Discriminatory Enrollment Process:

- Explore Academy's enrollment process will be fair, transparent, and accessible to all families. We will not discriminate based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, or other factors.

- We will implement a lottery system for student admissions, ensuring a random and equitable selection process and prioritizing access for students from underserved communities who may not otherwise have access to high-quality educational options.

3. Retention Efforts for Diverse Student Populations:

- Explore Academy will closely monitor student retention rates, ensuring that students from all backgrounds, including low-income families, students of color, and students with disabilities, remain enrolled and are supported throughout their educational journey.

- We will establish a system for regular family feedback through surveys, parent-teacher conferences, and other engagement activities to ensure that the school meets all families' needs, particularly those from underserved populations.

4. Supportive Learning Environment for All Students:

- Explore Academy is dedicated to providing a nurturing environment where every student feels welcomed and supported regardless of race or socio-economic status. We will offer resources like language support for English learners, special education services for students with disabilities, and academic support programs to ensure all students succeed.

- We will provide a robust curriculum that includes culturally responsive teaching practices, which reflect our student body's diverse experiences and backgrounds, fostering an inclusive learning environment for all students.

5. Ongoing Assessment of Diversity and Inclusivity:

- We will continually assess the demographics of our student body and make adjustments as needed to ensure that we maintain a diverse student population. This includes analyzing data on race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and other factors and using this data to inform recruitment, enrollment, and retention strategies.

9Cii. How the anticipated racial and socio-economic makeup of the student body would promote the purposes of the CSP to provide high-quality educational opportunities to all students, which may include a specialized educational program or mission:

The community where Explore Academy is located and the districts from which students are drawn are characterized by a high level of racial and socio-economic diversity. Many students in this area come from low-income households, and a significant percentage qualify for free or reduced-price lunch programs. There is also a high percentage of English learners and students with disabilities in the area, making it essential to provide a school that can meet the needs of these populations while offering equitable access to quality education.

Explore Academy is designed to be a school that promotes integration and provides equal access to educational opportunities for all students. We are committed to preventing segregation by ensuring that our school draws students from across the community, including students from different racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. We believe that a diverse student body enriches the learning experience for all students and prepares them for success in an increasingly global and interconnected society.

9Ciii. The anticipated impact of the proposed charter school on the racial and socio-economic diversity of the public schools and school districts from which students would be drawn to attend the charter school:

Explore Academy is committed to providing all students with an inclusive and equitable education. Based on a comprehensive review of the local community demographics and data from surrounding public schools, we project that our student body will reflect diverse backgrounds, including students from various racial, ethnic, and socio-economic groups.

In the community where Explore Academy is located and in the public school districts from which we will draw students, the demographics are as follows:

- Racial and Ethnic Diversity: The local community includes a mix of racial and ethnic groups, with a significant portion of students from Hispanic/Latino, African American, Asian, and White backgrounds. We plan to ensure that our student body mirrors this diversity.

- Socio-Economic Diversity: The surrounding area includes neighborhoods with a mix of socio-economic levels, ranging from low-income to middle-class families. Many families in the area qualify for free or reduced-price lunch programs, which speaks to the need for affordable, high-quality educational options.

9D. A robust family and community engagement plan designed to ensure the active participation of families and the community that includes the following:

9Di. How families and the community were, are, or will be engaged in determining the vision and design for the charter school, including specific examples of how families' and the community's input was, is, or is expected to be incorporated into the vision and design for the charter school:

Initial Community Involvement: From the outset, Explore Academy has prioritized active engagement with families and the local community to shape its vision. During the planning phase, we hosted community forums and conducted surveys to gather input on the educational priorities and needs that matter most to local families. This early feedback ensured that the school's mission, values, and educational approach aligned closely with the desires of the community, reflecting their expectations for a high-quality learning environment.

Ongoing Feedback Mechanisms: Explore Academy maintains an open line of communication with families through regular "Coffee with the Principal" sessions. These informal gatherings allow parents to discuss their thoughts on school initiatives, curriculum updates, and overall school direction. The feedback gathered from these forums is invaluable in refining our approach, allowing us to adapt to the evolving needs of the community continuously. The open nature of these sessions fosters a sense of partnership between the school and families, making them active participants in the school's growth.

Surveys and Polling:

In addition to regular forums, Explore Academy conducts family satisfaction surveys and community outreach activities to ensure that our programs meet the expectations of both students and families. These surveys cover various aspects of the school experience, including academic programs, extracurricular activities, school climate, and more. The feedback received is carefully analyzed and used to inform key decisions, from refining curricula to shaping new policy initiatives. For example, suggestions for new after-school programs or adjustments to teaching methods have been implemented directly based on survey results.

Community Partnerships:

Explore Academy's active involvement in the Orange Chamber of Commerce and other local organizations ensures we stay connected with the broader community. We engage regularly with local business leaders, civic groups, and other stakeholders through these partnerships. These interactions provide additional insight into community needs, helping us shape school programs supporting student success and community development. For instance, through our chamber membership, we've developed internship and mentorship opportunities that enrich our students' learning experiences and connect them to local industries.

Incorporating Community Input into School Design:

The input from families and community members is consistently integrated into the school's vision and design. Examples include:

- Curriculum Adjustments: Feedback from parents regarding academic rigor and specialized programs has led to more targeted courses and extracurricular activities.

- School Environment: Community feedback about school safety, student well-being, and inclusivity has led to policy adjustments and the creation of initiatives that support a positive, welcoming school culture.

- Facility Enhancements: As a result of suggestions from local families, improvements have been made to school facilities, ensuring that the learning environment is both functional and inspiring.

9Dii. How the charter school will meaningfully engage with both families and the community to create strong and ongoing partnerships:

Parent and Community Engagement Initiatives:

Explore Academy is committed to fostering strong connections with families and the broader community through various engagement initiatives. One key strategy is hosting regular Family Nights, which bring together families, school staff, and community members. These events serve as a platform to discuss the school's progress, share resources, and strengthen community ties. Family Nights feature a mix of workshops, information sessions, and social events, all designed to provide valuable insights, address questions, and create an inclusive environment. These gatherings help ensure that families are informed and actively involved in the school's ongoing development.

Teacher and Family Partnerships:

Building personal relationships between teachers and families is at the heart of Explore Academy's approach to engagement. Each teacher is encouraged to establish regular, open lines of communication with families. This includes weekly newsletters that update classroom activities, upcoming events, and student progress. Additionally, parent-teacher conferences are held throughout the year to discuss individual student achievements and areas for growth. Teachers also offer volunteer opportunities in the classroom, inviting families to participate directly in their child's learning process. This two-way communication channel ensures that families are informed and have a direct avenue for sharing feedback on their child's experience at school.

Community Engagement Initiative (CEI) Committee:

Explore Academy has established a Community Engagement Initiative (CEI) Committee, pivotal in maintaining ongoing partnerships with families and the local community. The CEI comprises a diverse group, including the school leader, teachers, parents, and students. This group meets regularly to provide input on decision-making, school programs, and policies. The CEI ensures that Explore Academy remains responsive to the community's needs, helping to identify areas for improvement and implement practices that benefit all stakeholders. The committee also plays a crucial role in securing funding for community-driven initiatives and ensures that resources are used to address the evolving needs of families and students.

Ongoing Engagement Strategies:

In addition to these initiatives, Explore Academy is committed to regularly assessing and adapting its engagement strategies to maintain strong and meaningful relationships with families and the community. This includes:

- Surveys and feedback mechanisms to continuously gather input from families on school initiatives and programs.

- Community partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and civic groups to provide resources, internships, and support for school activities.

- Family volunteer opportunities allow families to actively participate in school events, fundraisers, and special projects, further strengthening the bond between the school and the community.

9Diii. How the charter school will foster a collaborative culture that involves the families of all students, including underserved students, in ensuring their ongoing input in school decision-making:

Inclusive Decision-Making:

Explore Academy is committed to ensuring that families from all backgrounds, including those of underserved students, are meaningfully involved in school decision-making. This commitment is reflected in our inclusive approach, where we actively invite families of students with disabilities, English learners, and other underserved groups to participate in key school committees and decision-making bodies. For example:

Parents of students with disabilities are given opportunities to provide input on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), ensuring that educational plans are tailored to meet the specific needs of each student.

Families of English learners are included in the development and ongoing evaluation of language support programs, ensuring that these programs effectively support students' academic success and integration.

By involving families directly in these processes, we create an environment where every family has a voice in shaping their children's educational experience.

Family Participation in School Governance:

Explore Academy encourages family involvement in leadership through the Parent Task Force (PTF) to further strengthen family engagement. The PTF serves as a key governance body where families have a direct voice in shaping essential school policies, events, and activities. We ensure that families from all student populations, especially underserved populations, are encouraged to participate in these leadership roles. This involvement helps build a strong sense of ownership and partnership in the school community, empowering parents to influence decisions that directly affect their children's education.

Regular Check-Ins with Families:

To maintain ongoing communication and ensure that families, including those of underserved students, are continuously involved, Explore Academy holds monthly check-ins with families. These check-ins provide a structured opportunity for parents to discuss their child's academic progress, share concerns, and provide feedback on school initiatives.

- Special attention is given to families of students with disabilities and English learners, as their children may require additional support or accommodations. These monthly sessions are vital for ensuring that families feel heard and their concerns are addressed promptly.

- Regular collaboration between school staff and families fosters a deeper understanding of student's needs and helps create a more supportive and responsive learning environment.

Collaborative Culture in Practice:

These initiatives—inclusive decision-making, leadership opportunities in school governance, and regular family check-ins—create a collaborative culture where all families, including those of underserved students, feel valued and engaged. By making their input a key component of school decision-making, Explore Academy ensures that policies and practices are responsive to the student body's diverse needs, ultimately supporting every student's success.

9Div. How the charter school's recruitment, admissions, enrollment, and retention processes will engage and accommodate families from various backgrounds, including English learners, students with disabilities, and students of color, including by holding enrollment and recruitment events on weekends or during non-standard work hours, making interpreters available, and providing enrollment and recruitment information in widely accessible formats (e.g., hard copy and online in multiple languages; as appropriate, large print or braille for visually-impaired individuals) through widely available and transparent means (e.g., online and at community locations):

Inclusive Recruitment Events:

Explore Academy prioritizes accessibility and inclusivity in its recruitment and enrollment efforts. We host recruitment and enrollment events on weekends and during evening hours to accommodate working families. These events are held at convenient locations, such as local community centers and the school campus, to ensure that families have ample opportunities to learn about the school and enroll their children. These flexible event times and locations make it easier for families from various backgrounds, including those with non-standard work hours, to attend and engage with the school.

Interpreter Services:

To ensure that all families can fully participate in the recruitment and enrollment process, interpreter services are provided during these events and for parent-teacher conferences and other meetings. This is particularly important for families who speak languages other than English. By offering interpreters, we enable families to engage meaningfully in discussions about their children's education, regardless of their language proficiency.

Multi-Language Resources:

Explore Academy is committed to ensuring all recruitment and enrollment materials are accessible to families from diverse linguistic backgrounds. All documents are available in multiple languages, including Spanish and English, in both online and print formats. This helps bridge language barriers and ensures that families have the information they need to make informed decisions about enrolling their children. For families with visually impaired members, we provide materials in large print or Braille as appropriate, ensuring accessibility for all.

Transparent Enrollment Process:

Explore Academy's enrollment process is designed to be clear and transparent. Information regarding how to apply, important deadlines and required documents is communicated through various channels, such as the school website, social media, and community flyers. This ensures that all families, regardless of background, have equal access to essential information about the application process.

Retention Efforts for All Families:

To promote strong retention rates, Explore Academy works closely with families to ensure that students are supported and engaged throughout their time at the school. Regular family satisfaction surveys are conducted to assess how well the school is meeting the needs of all families, particularly those of students with disabilities, English learners, and students of color. These surveys help identify areas for improvement and provide valuable insights into the school's climate.

In addition to tracking student progress, we provide families with resources and strategies to support their child's academic success, ensuring that every student feels valued and supported. This helps foster a strong school community where families feel connected and invested in their children's educational journey.

9Dv. How the charter school has engaged or will engage families and the community to develop an instructional model to best serve the targeted student population and their families, including students with disabilities and English learners:

Family and Community Input on Instructional Needs:

From the very beginning, Explore Academy has actively involved families and the community in shaping the school's instructional model to ensure it meets the diverse needs of all students, including students with disabilities and English learners. This process began with community forums and surveys that gathered input from families on their educational priorities. These discussions helped us understand the specific needs of our students and provided valuable insights into how we could design an instructional model that is both inclusive and effective. By engaging families early on, we ensured that the school's educational approach aligns with their expectations and addresses their children's unique needs.

Ongoing Family Engagement in Curriculum Development:

Explore Academy continues to engage families in developing and refining the school's curriculum. We host regular workshops and feedback sessions where parents can share their thoughts on the instructional model, including what is working well and what could be improved. For example, parents of students with disabilities are encouraged to participate in discussions about how best to support their child's learning and contribute to the design of individualized accommodations or modifications. Similarly, families of English learners provide input on language support strategies, ensuring that these programs are responsive to the diverse linguistic needs of our student body.

Teacher Collaboration and Family Input:

Teachers at Explore Academy regularly engage with families to gain a deeper understanding of student's needs and to align instructional strategies with family expectations. Teachers actively seek feedback on how well their teaching methods support students with disabilities and English learners. This two-way communication ensures that instructional practices are continually refined to meet the needs of all students. For example, teachers may adapt lessons based on family input, incorporating specific strategies for English learners or providing additional support for students with disabilities. This collaborative approach ensures that the school's instructional model evolves based on ongoing family feedback.

Specialized Programs and Support for Targeted Students:

Explore Academy has developed specialized programs to support students with disabilities and English learners, but these programs are not created in isolation. Families and community members are consulted regularly to ensure that the programs reflect the specific needs of their children. For instance, the school works closely with parents to create Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities and involves families in developing language support programs for English learners. This ensures that our instructional model is not only inclusive but also responsive to the needs of every student.

Community Partnerships for Instructional Support:

We also partner with local organizations and agencies to enhance our instructional support, particularly for students with disabilities and English learners. These partnerships provide additional resources and services that complement the school's instructional model. For example, we work with local organizations that specialize in supporting students with disabilities to provide professional development for our staff, ensuring they have the knowledge and tools to support these students best. Similarly, we collaborate with language support agencies to ensure our English learner programs are research-based and culturally responsive.

Transparent Communication and Collaboration:

Throughout the process of developing the instructional model, Explore Academy maintains transparent communication with families and the community. We regularly share updates on the progress of instructional initiatives and seek input on how to continue improving. By fostering a culture of collaboration, we ensure that the school's instructional model is not only effective but also reflects the values and needs of the community we serve.

Explore Academy's commitment to engaging families and the community in the development of the instructional model ensures that all students, including students with disabilities and English learners, receive the support they need to succeed. By maintaining open communication and collaboration, we create an environment where every student has access to a high-quality education that is tailored to their unique needs.

9E. How the plans for the operation of the charter school will support and reflect the needs of students and families in the community, including consideration of district or community assets and how the school's location, or anticipated location if a facility has not been secured, will facilitate access for the targeted student population (e.g., access to public transportation or other transportation options, the demographics of neighborhoods within walking distance of the school, and transportation plans and costs for students who are not able to walk or use public transportation to access the school):

Regular Parent Feedback Collection:

At Explore Academy, we understand the importance of involving families in decision-making to ensure our school operations align with their needs. We regularly collect feedback through a variety of channels, including surveys and events such as Coffee with Admin, ELAC (English Learner Advisory Committee) meetings, SSC (School Site Council) meetings, and PTF (Parent Task Force) gatherings. These forums allow parents to share their thoughts on the school's programs, policies, and initiatives, helping us stay connected with the community's needs.

Actionable Feedback:

We take parent input seriously and use it to inform school operations. Feedback collected during these events is carefully reviewed and shared with our CEI (Continuous Education Improvement) team, which ensures that suggestions and concerns are addressed and acted upon. This continuous feedback loop helps improve our school's operations, programs, and policies, making the school more responsive and reflective of the community's evolving needs.

Community and District Assets:

In planning the operations of Explore Academy, we consider the various district and community assets available. This includes assessing nearby resources such as local public services, community organizations, and other facilities that could support the needs of our students. By leveraging these assets, we enhance the services and support available to our students, ensuring that the school plays an integral role in the broader community.

Access to Public Transportation:

The location of Explore Academy has been strategically chosen to ensure easy access by public transportation. We aim to provide a convenient option for students from surrounding neighborhoods to reach the school. Being accessible by public transit helps remove barriers to attendance and ensures that transportation is not a challenge for families in the community.

Neighborhood Demographics:

We are committed to serving a diverse student population, and the demographics of neighborhoods within walking distance of the school have been carefully considered. This ensures that we create an inclusive environment that reflects the surrounding community's cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic diversity. The school aims to be a welcoming place for all families, including those from underserved backgrounds.

Transportation Options and Costs:

For families unable to walk or use public transportation, we have developed a transportation plan to ensure all students can access the school. This plan may include bus services or financial assistance to help families cover transportation costs. By offering these options, we ensure that no student is excluded due to transportation challenges, especially those from low-income families or underserved communities.

Accessibility for Targeted Student Population:

We ensure that our school's location and transportation plans are tailored to support students from underserved communities, including English learners, students with disabilities, and low-income families. These groups often face additional barriers to accessing education, and we take extra steps to ensure that our location and transportation options remove these obstacles. By considering the specific needs of

these student populations, we create a supportive environment where all students have an equal opportunity to succeed.

9F. A description of the steps the applicant has taken or will take to ensure that the proposed charter school:

(1) would not hamper, delay, or negatively affect any desegregation efforts in the community in which the charter school would be located and the public school districts from which students are, or would be, drawn to attend the charter school, including efforts to comply with a court order, statutory obligation, or voluntary efforts to create and maintain desegregated public schools; and

(2) to ensure that the proposed charter school would not otherwise increase racial or socio-economic segregation or isolation in the schools from which the students are, or would be, drawn to attend the charter school.

Continuous Monitoring of Enrollment Practices:

Explore Academy regularly reviews and adjusts our enrollment policies to ensure our practices do not hinder desegregation. We make sure that these policies are fair, open, and accessible to all families, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socio-economic background. By actively tracking our enrollment data, we ensure that we are not unintentionally contributing to the re-segregation of schools in the area and that our school remains inclusive and supportive of all students, in line with community and legal desegregation goals.

Preventing Racial or Socio-Economic Segregation or Isolation

Inclusive Enrollment and Recruitment Efforts:

Explore Academy employs inclusive recruitment strategies to ensure that we serve a diverse range of students, particularly those from underserved communities. This includes outreach to low-income families, students of color, English learners, and students with disabilities. We host events and provide resources in multiple languages to ensure our recruitment efforts are accessible and equitable for all families. By reaching out to a wide range of families and ensuring that our enrollment process is transparent and accessible, we work to prevent the creation of a student body that is racially or socio-economically segregated.

Promoting a Diverse and Inclusive Student Body:

We are committed to creating a diverse student body that reflects the demographics of the surrounding community. Explore Academy considers the racial, ethnic, and socio-economic makeup of the neighborhoods surrounding the school in its recruitment efforts, ensuring that we do not inadvertently create a student body that is isolated or lacks diversity. By recruiting from a wide cross-section of the community, we help prevent segregation and promote an inclusive educational environment for all students.

Regular Data Review to Ensure Inclusivity:

Explore Academy regularly conducts data reviews to assess the diversity of our student body to ensure that our school's operations do not lead to racial or socio-economic segregation. We examine the racial, ethnic, and socio-economic composition of our students and compare it to the local community. If we identify any concerns about potential segregation, we will take corrective actions, such as adjusting our recruitment strategies, offering additional outreach, or implementing support programs to ensure that students from all backgrounds have equal opportunities to attend Explore Academy.

Engagement with Community Partners:

Explore Academy actively collaborates with local public schools and community organizations to ensure our operations support efforts to maintain an integrated community. We value our partnerships with local organizations and believe that by working together, we can create more opportunities for diverse groups of students. These partnerships help to ensure that our school's existence does not isolate or separate students but instead contributes to a more inclusive educational landscape for the entire community.

Fostering a Welcoming Environment for All Students:

Our school culture is grounded in inclusivity, and we actively promote an environment where all students feel welcome and valued. Explore Academy's policies and programs are designed to provide equitable opportunities for students from all backgrounds, particularly those from underserved communities. Through cultural competency training for staff, programs that highlight the diverse backgrounds of our students, and support services for students who need extra help, we foster a school environment that prevents isolation or marginalization of any group.

Question 10. Closure Plans and Procedures

Required for all applicants.

Describe clear plans and procedures to provide student records to another public school or school district in a timeline manner and to help students enrolled in the charter school to attend other high-quality schools, in the event that the applicant school closes or loses its charter:

Explore Academy has a clear plan and procedures in place to provide student records to another public school and school district. The actions and timeline is describe below. Closure of Explore Academy will be documented by official action of the Board of Directors. The action will identify the reason for closure. The official action will also identify an entity and person or persons responsible for closure-related activities. Once official action of the Board of Directors has occurred, Explore Academy will promptly notify parents/guardians and students of the Charter School, the Orange County

Department of Education, the Charter School's SELPA, the retirement systems in which the Charter School's employees participate (e.g., Public Employees' Retirement System, State Teachers' Retirement System, and federal social security), and the California Department of Education (CDE) of the closure as well as the effective date of the closure. This notice will also include the name(s) of and contact information for the person(s) to whom reasonable inquiries may be made regarding the closure; the pupils' school districts of residence; and the manner in which parents/guardians may obtain copies of pupil records, including specific information on completed courses and credits that meet graduation requirements. Pursuant to 5 CCR Section 11962, Explore Academy will provide notification of the closure to CDE within ten calendar day of any official action taken by the chartering authority.

Upon closure of the charter school, all student records will be transferred to the authorizing District and/or County as appropriate in a timely manner. If the authorizing District and/or County (as appropriate) will not or cannot store the records, Explore Academy will work with the County Office of Education to determine a suitable alternative location for storage. Provisions for the authorizing entity to maintain all school records, including financial and attendance records, will reflect the timelines stated in 5 CCR sections 16023 through 16026. All state assessment results, special education records, and personnel records will be transferred to and maintained by the entity responsible for closure-related activities in accordance with applicable law. During the closure process, Explore Academy will also develop a list of pupils in each grade level and the classes they have completed, together with information on the pupils' districts of residence, which it will provide to the entity responsible for closure-related activities. As applicable, Explore Academy will provide parents, students and the District with copies of all appropriate student records and will otherwise assist students in transferring to their next school in a timely manner. All transfers of student records will be made in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g.

Explore Academy utilizes a Student Information System (SIS), approved by the Board, to manage all student data such as demographics, program codes, grades as well as attendance, rosters, health records, assessment data, schedules, discipline, support services, etc. The SIS will allow Explore Academy to ensure accurate student records and data are collected and transferred in a timely manner. All appropriate staff is trained on the effective, correct use of the SIS. All student records are confidential.

In the event that Explore Academy closes or loses its charter, the Charter School will support students enrolled in the charter school to attend other high-quality schools. The notification to the parents/guardians and students of the Charter School regarding the closure will include information to assist parents/guardians and students in locating suitable alternative programs including high-quality schools. This may be a list of nearby high-quality schools, including charter schools, with strong academic backgrounds and communicate these options with families through this notice. This notice will be provided promptly following the Board's decision to close Explore Academy. Explore Academy will support students and their families with organizing school visits so that students can visit potential new school sites and determine whether it is a good fit. Explore Academy

will also work closely with the charter school authorizer to ensure a smooth transition and transfer of student records to minimize disruption in students' education.

Question 11. Transportation Plans

Required for all applicants.

Describe the steps that the applicant has taken to consider and plan for the transportation needs of all students:

Support for Families Facing Transportation Challenges:

Explore Academy is committed to ensuring that all students can attend school regardless of their socioeconomic status or transportation challenges. To support families who may face difficulties getting their children to school, the school will offer various transportation options and assistance programs. This will include helping families connect with local transportation services, providing subsidized bus passes where needed, and offering logistical support to ensure every student can access reliable transportation.

Assistance for MKV and FY Students:

In particular, for MKV (Military Kids and Veterans) and FY (Foster Youth) students, Explore Academy will provide specialized transportation support. These students may have unique circumstances that affect their ability to commute to school. As part of our commitment to ensuring equitable access, Explore Academy will work with local services, including Hop Skip, to help these students secure transportation. Hop Skip is a community-based service that can assist students with transportation needs, and we will facilitate access for eligible families to help them get their children to school safely and on time.

Ensuring Equal Access for All Students:

By offering these transportation supports and partnerships, Explore Academy aims to eliminate any barriers related to transportation that could prevent students from attending school regularly. Our goal is to ensure that transportation challenges do not create disparities in access to education, particularly for students from underserved backgrounds.

Question 12. Notification to the Authorizer

Required for all applicants.

Indicate the date and specify person at its charter authorizer the charter school notified of its intent to apply for a continuation of PCSGP funds (Include a copy of this notification with this application as Attachment E).

Date Charter Authorizer Contacted: January 6, 2025

Name of Person at Charter Authorizer Contacted: Aracely Chastain, Director of Charter Schools Unit

Question 13. Quality Controls

Each applicant must describe the quality controls agreed to between the applicant and the authorized public chartering agency involved, such as a contract or performance agreement, how a school's performance in the State's accountability system and impact on student achievement (which may include student academic growth) will be one of the most important factors for renewal or revocation of the school's charter, and how the SE and the authorized public chartering agency involved will reserve the right to revoke or not renew a school's charter based on financial, structural, or operational factors involving the management of the school.

Required for all applicants.

13A. Describe the quality controls agreed to between the applicant and the authorized public chartering agency involved. Describe the 15 required elements under 47605(c)(5) contained in the charter petition and identify the page number of the charter petition on which they are located:

Explore Academy is a self-managed, independent entity. The Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) is Explore Academy's authorizer and as such, will perform supervisory oversight of Explore Academy, as required by statute. Explore Academy's Governing Board (The Board) may contract for services provided by the County, and is responsible for negotiating and approval of all contractual agreements. Pursuant to Ed Code Section 47604.3, Explore Academy will promptly respond to all reasonable inquiries from OCDE, and agrees to OCDE's right to make random visits and inspections in order to carry out its statutorily required oversight. Explore Academy will provide reporting to OCDE as required by law and as requested by OCDE including, but not limited to, the following:

- California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS),
- Actual Average Daily Attendance reports
- All financial reports required by Ed Code Sections 47604.33 and 47605.6(m)
- The School Accountability Report Card (SARC).

A. The Educational Program (Pg. 15)
Explore Academy provides a unique educational opportunity for the diverse student population throughout Orange County. Given the pervasive nature of the achievement gap for the County's largest subgroups—Hispanic, English Learner, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged students, and Students with Disabilities—it is imperative that an innovative and proven educational model be made available to all students, regardless of zip code. The instructional strategies, curriculum and learning objectives which are

outlined in the charter petition are reviewed by the authorizer for compliance with state standards and alignment to the LCAP.

B. Measurable Student Outcomes (Pg. 70)
Pupil outcomes at Explore Academy address the State Priorities. They are informed by State Standards and reflect the mission and curriculum in Element A. The academic and non-academic performance metrics data are shared with the authorizer when developing and reviewing the LCAP annually.

C. Methods of Measurement and Other Uses of Data (Pg. 89)
Student assessments are designed to align to the mission, exit outcomes, and the curriculum described in the Charter Petition. Explore Academy shall meet all statewide standards and conduct the required student assessments pursuant to Education Code Section 60605, and any other State Standards or assessments authorized in statute. Explore Academy shall participate in the CAASPP and all other state-mandated assessments, including but not limited to the ELPAC and Physical Fitness Test (PFT). Information from these assessments will be included in the School Accountability Report Card and the LCAP which is reported to the authorizer.

Teachers will use assessment rubrics as teaching tools in the classroom by helping students to interpret their performance and comprehend their results during their seminars and at the exit of their seminars. If a student's performance is below target (not making adequate progress), the parent/guardian will be advised in a special conference and remedial strategies will be communicated. Leadership team meet monthly to address the following:

- Evaluate data and correlate to instructional decisions.
- Review progress-monitoring data at the grade level and classroom level to identify students and their academic levels.
- Identify professional development to enhance students' achievement levels, decisions, and practice new programs and skills.
- Facilitate the process of building consensus, increasing infrastructure, and making decisions about implementation.

If student academic achievement falls short of the targeted goals, the Board will direct the Executive Director/Principal to develop and implement a detailed action plan with responsible personnel and instructional support staff to ensure that all goals and corrective actions are implemented in a timely manner. The action plan will consist of a calendar of strategic activities such as ongoing professional development, interventions, differentiated instruction for students, and a scope and sequence of coaching cycles for teachers. This action plan will be incorporated into the school's annual LCAP as relevant.

D. Governance Structure of the School (Pg. 99)
The Charter School will operate autonomously from the County, with the exception of the supervisory oversight as required by statute and other contracted services as may

be negotiated between the County and the Charter School. Pursuant to Education Code Section 47604(d), the County shall not be liable for the debts and obligations of the Charter School, operated as a California non-profit public benefit corporation, or for claims arising from the performance of acts, errors, or omissions by the Charter School, as long as the County has complied with all oversight responsibilities required by law.

The ExploreK12 Governing Board ("the Board") is the ultimate policy-making body that establishes the curriculum, academic path, and operation of Explore Academy and is responsible for providing continuing oversight of school operations, including the responsibility of properly managing funds, ensuring special populations have access to the program and compliance with all state and federal regulations. As such the Board is solely responsible to the County for the fulfillment of the charter petition.

The Charter School, including its non-profit corporation, shall promptly respond to all inquiries, including but not limited to inquiries regarding financial records from Orange County Department of Education and the County Board (the Chartering Authority), and shall cooperate with the Chartering Authority regarding any inquiries. The Charter School shall provide the Chartering Authority with current and accurate contact information for the Charter School, school administrators, and Board members.

To facilitate formal involvement for parents in school governance, each Explore Academy campus will have a School Site Council ("SSC"). The SSC will provide input to the ExploreK12 Governing Board through the Executive Director and/or site Principal regarding school operations, staffing, teaching and learning, and climate. The SSC will provide a report to the Governing Board at least two times per school year. The English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC) will provide another means for parent engagement in school decision-making and governance. The SSC and ELAC will be part of the stakeholder groups that participate in the governance of the Charter School by providing input into the Charter School's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP).

E. Employee Qualifications (Pg. 106)
Charter School shall adhere to all State and federal requirements that are applicable to teachers and paraprofessional employees. Charter School shall ensure that its teachers shall hold the Commission on Teacher Credentialing certificate, permit, or other document required for the teacher's certificated assignment in accordance with Education Code section 47605(l)(1). Charter School shall maintain current copies of all teacher credentials at Charter School and make them readily available for inspection. Charter School certifies that all of its teachers have obtained certificates of clearance and satisfy the requirements for professional fitness pursuant to Education Code sections 44339, 44340, and 44341 in accordance with Education Code section 47605(l)(2).

Charter School shall comply with Education Code section 44030.5 with respect to reporting a change in employment status to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing where the change of employment status is a result of an allegation of

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misconduct, or while an allegation of misconduct is pending, and with Education Code section 44939.5 regarding the reporting of egregious misconduct.

F. Health and Safety (Pg. 115)
The health and safety of the students and staff members of Explore Academy is of highest priority. Therefore, Explore Academy will adopt and implement a comprehensive set of health, safety and risk management policies, a copy of which will be submitted to OCDE at least 30 days before the commencement of instruction.

Employees and contractors of the Charter School will be required to submit to a criminal background check and furnish a criminal record summary as required by Education Code Sections 44237 and 45125.1. Applicants for employment must submit two sets of fingerprints to the California Department of Justice for the purpose of obtaining a criminal record summary, prior to employment. Volunteers who will volunteer outside of the direct supervision of a credentialed employee shall be fingerprinted and receive background clearance prior to volunteering. The Charter School shall not hire any person, in either a certificated or classified position, who has been convicted of a violent or serious felony except as otherwise provided by law, pursuant to Education Code Sections 44830.1 and 45122.1. The Executive Director shall monitor compliance with this policy and report to the Charter School Board of Directors on a regular basis. The Board Chairperson shall monitor the fingerprinting and background clearance of the Executive Director.

The Charter School shall adopt a School Safety Plan, which shall include identification of appropriate strategies and programs that will provide or maintain a high level of school safety and address the Charter School's procedures for complying with applicable laws related to school safety, including the development of all of the safety topics listed in subparagraphs (A) to (J), inclusive, of paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) of Section 32282. All Charter School staff shall be trained on this Plan. The Charter School Safety Plan will be reviewed and updated by March 1 of every year by the Charter School.

G. Means to Achieve Racial and Ethnic, Special Education, and English Learners, included Redesignated Fluent English Proficient Pupils Balance (Pg. 120)
Explore Academy strives to maintain a racial and ethnic balance among its students that is reflective of the general population residing within Orange County Department of Education territorial jurisdiction, as well as a balance of students who qualify for special education services and are designated as English Learners, including students redesignated as Fluent English Proficient, that is reflective of County percentages. As a proposed countywide-benefit charter school, Explore Academy seeks to recruit educationally disadvantaged, and racially and socioeconomically diverse students from throughout Orange County. The Charter School's outreach efforts (i.e., distribution of physical flyers, brochures, and recruitment materials) will be targeted at a diverse set of students in Orange County. This will ensure that the Charter School's racial and ethnic balance, enrollment of students with disabilities, and enrollment of English learners and redesignated fluent English proficient pupils is reflective of the district-operated public

schools nearby since this population will receive printed outreach materials and information about the Charter School. Student demographics will be accurately reported through CALPADS.

H. Student Admission Policies and Procedures (Pg. 146)
Explore Academy will actively recruit a diverse student population from throughout Orange County. Admission to the Charter School shall be open to any resident of the state of California. Explore Academy shall admit all pupils who wish to attend. No test or assessment shall be administered to students prior to acceptance and enrollment into the Charter School. Explore Academy will comply with all laws establishing minimum and maximum age for public school attendance in charter schools.

Pursuant to Education Code Section 47605.6(e)(4)(D), the Charter School shall post a notice developed by the CDE on the Charter School website, outlining the requirements of Section 47605.6(e)(4) which states the Charter School shall not discourage a pupil from enrolling or seeking to enroll in the charter school for any reason, and make this notice available to parents.

I. Financial Audit (Pg. 122)
In accordance with Education Code Sections 47605.6(b)(5)(I) and 47605.6(m), an independent financial audit of the books and records will be conducted at Explore Academy annually. Explore Academy will send a copy of its annual audited financial report to the chief financial officer of the Orange County Department of Education, the Office of the State Controller, and the California Department of Education by December 15 of each year. The Executive Director will review any audit exceptions or deficiencies and report to the Governing Board with recommendations on how to resolve them, and the timeline for the same. The independent financial audit of the Charter School is a public record to be provided to the public upon request.

J. Pupil Suspension and Expulsion (Pg. 123)
The Suspension and Expulsion Policy and Procedures are established to promote learning and protect the safety and wellbeing of all students at the Charter School. Consistent with this Policy, it may be necessary to suspend or expel a student from regular classroom instruction. This shall serve as the Charter School's policy and procedures for student suspension, expulsion, and involuntary removal, and it may be amended from time to time without the need to seek a material revision of the charter so long as the amendments comport with legal requirements.

A student identified as an individual with disabilities or for whom the Charter School has a basis of knowledge of a suspected disability pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 ("IDEA") or who is qualified for services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ("Section 504") is subject to the same grounds for suspension and expulsion and is accorded the same due process procedures applicable to general education students except when federal and state law mandates additional or different procedures.

The Charter School will follow all applicable federal and state laws including but not limited to the applicable provisions of the California Education Code, when imposing any form of discipline on a student identified as an individual with disabilities or for whom the Charter School has a basis of knowledge of a suspected disability or who is otherwise qualified for such services or protections according to due process to such students.

K. Employee Retirement System (Pg. 143)
The Charter School's Governing Board retains the option to consider any public or private retirement plans, and to coordinate such participation with existing programs, as it deems appropriate. At a minimum, eligible employees shall participate in federal social security. The Executive Director shall be solely responsible for ensuring that such retirement coverage is arranged and that any required payroll deductions and related data is provided to Orange County Department of Education as required by Education Code Section 47611.3.

L. Public School Attendance Alternatives (Pg. 149)
No student is required to attend Explore Academy. Students who reside within the county who choose not to attend Explore Academy may attend any school within the county according to county and/or district policy.

Parents and guardians of each student enrolled in Explore Academy will be informed on admissions forms that the students have no right to admission in a particular school of a local education agency as a consequence of enrollment in Explore Academy, except to the extent that such a right is extended by the local education agency.

M. Rights of County Office of Education Employees (Pg. 150)
No employee of Orange County Department of Education shall be required to work at Explore Academy.

Members of Explore Academy staff who leave employment at OCDE to work at Explore Academy shall not have any right to return to employment within OCDE without prior consent by OCDE.

Employees of Explore Academy who were not previous employees of OCDE will not become employees of OCDE and will not have the right to employment within OCDE upon leaving employment of Explore Academy.

Upon dismissal from Explore Academy, no previous OCDE employee may return to the county office for employment without the prior written consent of OCDE. Sick or vacation leave or years of service credit at the County or any school district will not be transferred to the Charter School. Employment by the Charter School provides no rights of employment at any other entity, including any rights in the case of closure of the Charter School.

N. Dispute Resolution (Pg. 144)

The Charter School recognizes that it cannot bind the County to a dispute resolution procedure to which the County does not agree. The following policy is intended as a starting point for a discussion of dispute resolution procedures. Explore Academy is willing to consider changes to the process outlined in the charter petition as suggested by the County.

The Charter School and the County will be encouraged to attempt to resolve any disputes amicably and reasonably without resorting to formal procedures. If a dispute arises, it will be framed in a written dispute statement and referred to the County Superintendent and the Executive Director. If the meeting fails to resolve the dispute, the Superintendent and the Executive Director or their respective designee will meet to jointly identify a neutral third party mediator to facilitate the resolution. The costs of the mediator shall be split equally between the County and the Charter School. If mediation does not resolve the dispute either party may pursue any other remedy available under the law. All timelines and procedures in this section may be revised upon mutual written agreement of the County and the Charter School.

O. School Closure Procedures (Pg. 151)
Closure of the Charter School will be documented by official action of the Board of Directors. The action will identify the reason for closure. The official action will also identify an entity and person or persons responsible for closure-related activities.

The Charter School will promptly notify parents and students of the Charter School, the Orange County Department of Education, the Charter School's SELPA, the retirement systems in which the Charter School's employees participate (e.g., Public Employees' Retirement System, State Teachers' Retirement System, and federal social security), and the California Department of Education of the closure as well as the effective date of the closure

As applicable, the Charter School will provide parents, students and the District with copies of all appropriate student records and will otherwise assist students in transferring to their next school. All transfers of student records will be made in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g. All student records of the Charter School shall be transferred to the authorizing District and/or County as appropriate upon Charter School closure. If the authorizing District and/or County (as appropriate) will not or cannot store the records, the Charter School shall work with the County Office of Education to determine a suitable alternative location for storage.

All state assessment results, special education records, and personnel records will be transferred to and maintained by the entity responsible for closure-related activities in accordance with applicable law.

As soon as reasonably practical, the Charter School will prepare final financial records. The Charter School will also have an independent audit completed within six months after closure. The Charter School will pay for the final audit. The audit will be prepared

by a qualified Certified Public Accountant selected by the Charter School and will be provided to the County promptly upon its completion. The final audit will include an accounting of all financial assets, including cash and accounts receivable and an inventory of property, equipment, and other items of material value, an accounting of the liabilities, including accounts payable and any reduction in apportionments as a result of audit findings or other investigations, loans, and unpaid staff compensation, and an assessment of the disposition of any restricted funds received by or due to the Charter School. Any assets acquired from the County or County property will be promptly returned upon Charter School closure to the County.

13B. Identify the page number of the charter petition on which the following requirements under *EC* Section 47605(e)(1) are located:

13Bi. The charter school is nonsectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices, and all other operations: Pg. 3

13Bii. The charter school shall not charge tuition: Pg. 3

13C. Describe additional quality controls contained in a Memorandum of Understanding or any additional contract or agreement with the charter authorizer:

Within ten (10) business days of Charter School board meetings, including special and emergency board meetings, Charter School shall provide OCDE with a complete audio recording of the meeting and all materials provided to the governing board by its administration, contractors, or the public including approved previous meeting minutes, except for confidential communications as defined in Evidence Code section 952 and Government Code section 54963. Charter School will update OCDE of any changes to the charter school board calendar within ten (10) business days.

Charter School will provide Brown Act and conflict of interest training to its governing board members and top administrative staff within 45 days of taking office or becoming employed, or as otherwise agreed with OCDE, and at least once every year. Charter School will certify that the training has been provided to the specified individuals.

Charter School will authorize OCDE to access educational records maintained by Charter School, in accordance with FERPA, and provide notice of such in Charter School policies and Parent/Student Handbook.

Each year Charter School shall make all records relating to the expenses of all affiliated charter schools, if any, available to OCDE and Charter School's auditor for review and audit to ensure that all expenses are appropriately allocated. In addition, Charter School shall promptly respond as required by Education Code section 47604.3. The charter School will also provide an updated organizational chart and all parties operated or otherwise controlled by the same nonprofit public benefit corporation. Charter School shall establish a fiscal plan for repayment of any loans received by and/or on behalf of Charter School. It is agreed that OCDE shall receive written notice of all loans received by Charter School and repayment of loans shall be the sole responsibility of Charter School.

It is agreed that Charter School shall be solely responsible for all fiscal services such as payroll, purchasing, attendance reporting, and completion and submission of state budget forms, but may contract with OCDE for such services by way of a separate written contract.

Charter School will provide certificates of insurance coverage to OCDE prior to opening and annually thereafter. The Charter School shall assure that its vendors have adequate insurance coverage for the goods and/or services provided to Charter School to protect the interests of Charter School as well as OCDE, the Board and the County Superintendent. Charter School shall notify OCDE in writing within three (3) business days of any known pending or actual litigation and/or formal claim from any party or notice of potential criminal infraction, criminal or civil action against Charter School or any employee, or request for information by any governmental agency to the extent permitted by law. Charter School acknowledges and agrees it shall comply with all applicable laws and regulations as may be amended or added during the term of the charter.

Charter School shall ensure that all contracts for goods and services comply with the criteria noted in Title 5 section 11967.5.1 of California Code of Regulations. Charter School shall comply with bidding requirements tied to receipt of any state, federal or grant funds that require compliance with bidding that is more stringent or purchasing requirements. Additionally, records and information regarding implementation of the contract will be provided to OCDE in accordance with Education Code section 47604.3. Charter School will make every effort to ensure that vendors comply with all reasonable inquiries by OCDE for records and information related to this contract.

A pre-opening site visit shall be conducted by OCDE prior to the opening of each site of the Charter School authorized in the approved charter petition. Once open, Charter School must request a material revision to the charter petition in order to change the site, facility or location of any facility approved in the charter petition (referred to in charter as sites #1, 2, and 3). Charter school must request a material revision to charter petition to change or open additional sites (beyond sites #1, 2, and 3), facilities or locations. Following an approved revision to the charter, OCDE will conduct, without unreasonable delay, a pre-opening site visit of a new or changed Charter School facility prior to opening or use by students. Under extraordinary circumstances (e.g., a change of facilities necessitated by fire, natural disaster or inhabitability) the Parties may waive the pre-opening site visit.

Charter School shall provide OCDE with a Certificate of Occupancy issued by the applicable permitting agency, allowing Charter School to use and occupy the site, prior to opening, unless Charter School is located at a public school site provided pursuant to Proposition 39 or other facilities use agreement with a school district. In lieu of the zoning certification, Charter School can provide OCDE with evidence that zoning ordinances have been overridden by the school district in which the facility is located or by another entity authorized to override zoning ordinances pursuant to current or then

applicable state law. The facility must meet all applicable health and fire code requirements, zoning laws, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements for a K-12 public school.

13D. Describe how a school's performance in the State's accountability system and impact on student achievement (which may include student academic growth) will be one of the most important factors for renewal or revocation of the school's charter:

The Charter School is evaluated based on California Dashboard metrics including proficiency in ELA and Math and subgroup performances. Lack of academic and non-academic growth as demonstrated in the LCAP and the Dashboard indicates that the Charter School has failed to meet scholar needs. Revocation of the school's charter should be considered to protect students and ensure school accountability.

13E. Describe how the charter authorizer involved will reserve the right to revoke or not renew a school's charter based on financial, structural, or operational factors involving the management of the school:

The authorizer reserves the right to revoke or not renew a charter based on financial mismanagement, being non-compliant, or operational failures. The authorizer will monitor compliance through audits and site visits. If the school consistently fails to resolve issues, it can lead to a revocation of a charter to protect students' best interests.

Question 14. High-Quality Criteria – Replication and Expansion Applicants Only

Required for all Replication and Expansion applicants.

Each Replication or Expansion applicant must describe how they have met the following high-quality criteria and provide any applicable supporting documentation. Federal grant funds can be used for the operation of new charter schools and to replicate and expand existing high-quality charter schools as defined in 20 U.S.C. Section 7221i(8)(A) through (D). For the purposes of the grant application, the CDE defines "high-quality" criteria, which aligns with federal CSP requirements, as follows:

20 U.S.C. Section 7221i(8)(A)

- For existing charter schools applying for subgrants to replicate or expand, the CDE has defined "strong academic results" as those schools that:

  o Meet the "high performing" track for renewal based on *EC* Section 47607 criteria, as adopted by the Legislature in Assembly Bill 1505, or

  o Meet the "middle performing" track for renewal based on *EC* Section 47607.2 criteria and:

- Meet or exceed the district in which the charter school is physically located on academic performance indicators for English language arts and math.

20 U.S.C. Section 7221i(8)(B)

- The charter school has no significant issues in the areas of student safety, financial and operational management, or statutory or regulatory compliance.

20 U.S.C. Section 7221i(8)(C-D)

- Evidence of increasing academic achievement for all students and each subgroup of students served by the charter school based on the charter school's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), and

- Evidence of increasing graduation rates, if applicable, for all students and each subgroup of students served by the charter school.

All applicants for Replication and Expansion subgrants must meet the high-quality criteria in order to be awarded funds. All charter management organizations or non-profit organizations with authority over more than one charter school are only eligible to apply for Replication or Expansion subgrants and must meet the high-quality criteria for the charter school being replicated or expanded.

14a. 20 U.S.C. Section 7221i(8)(A) – Identify which criteria the replicating or expanding school meets:

1. Meet the "high performing" track for renewal based on *EC* Section 47607 criteria, as adopted by the Legislature in Assembly Bill 1505, or

2. Meet the "middle performing" track for renewal based on *EC* Section 47607.2 criteria and:

   - Meet or exceed the district in which the charter school is physically located on academic performance indicators for English language arts and math.

   N/A

14b. 20 U.S.C. Section 7221i(8)(B) – Provide an assurance from the charter administrator on school letterhead that the charter school that the school has had has no significant issues in the areas of student safety, financial and operational management, or statutory or regulatory compliance in the past 3 years and that the school has provided CDE with all official communications from its authorizer (e.g. notices of concern, notices to cure, notices of violation, intent to revoke, etc).   N/A

14c. 20 U.S.C. Section 7221i(8)(C-D) – Provide written description of how the charter school has met the following, with a link to the public posting of the school's LCAP.

1. Evidence of increasing academic achievement for all students and each subgroup of students served by the charter school based on the charter school's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), and

2. Evidence of increasing graduation rates, if applicable, for all students and each subgroup of students served by the charter school.

   N/A