



The Excel Center - Noblesville

Application for Charter Renewal
October 2019

Presented to the Indiana Charter School Board
by Goodwill Education Initiatives, Inc.

Exhibit B

Renewal Proposal Overview

The applicant group’s **designated representative** will serve as the contact for all communications, interviews, and notices from the ICSB regarding the submitted application.

Charter School Name: **The Excel Center – Noblesville**
300 N 17th Street
Charter School Address: Noblesville, IN 46060

Designated Representative and Contact Information (Phone & Email): **Betsy Delgado**
317-524-4380
bdelgado@goodwillindy.org

Mission Statement:
The mission of The Excel Center is to provide adults the opportunity and support to earn a high school diploma and post-secondary education while developing career paths that offer greater employment and career growth opportunities. Our schools “meet students where they are” in their education by providing a flexible structure and supportive relationships to help students manage work, life, and family concerns as they achieve their educational goals.

School Leader/Principal: **Dr. Steve Dillon**

Current Board of Directors	
Claudia Cummings, Chair	Marianne Glick
Jay Oliver, Vice-Chair	C. Perry Griffith, Jr.
Doris L. Pryor, Secretary	Richard Horn
Kent Kramer, President & Ex-officio	Jill Kramer
Daniel J. Riley, Treasurer	Shayla Pulliam

Current Grades Served	Future Enrollment	Grade Span for Next Charter Term	Maximum Enrollment for Next Charter Term
9-12	Year 6	9-12	185
9-12	Year 7	9-12	185
9-12	Year 8	9-12	185
9-12	Year 9	9-12	185
9-12	Year 10	9-12	185
9-12	At Capacity	9-12	185

Identify ESP or partner organization (if applicable): Not applicable

Executive Summary

Mission and Vision

The mission of The Excel Center is to provide adults the opportunity and support to earn a high school diploma and begin post-secondary education while developing career paths in sectors of the local economy that offer better-than-average employment and growth opportunities. The school will “meet students where they are” in their education by providing a flexible structure and supportive relationships to help them manage work, life, and family concerns as they achieve their educational goals.

The vision of Goodwill Education Initiatives, Inc. (GEI), through The Excel Center, is to deliver on the mission of Goodwill of Central and Southern Indiana, Inc. (GCSI): to change lives by empowering people to increase their independence and reach their potential through education, health, and employment. The Excel Center brings about hope and economic opportunity to communities, families, and individuals. Through the power of education, GEI’s goal is to set people on a pathway towards better career prospects that lead to economic self-sufficiency and ultimately break the cycle of poverty.

History

In 2003, GCSI leadership created GEI, a not-for-profit entity, to operate charter schools. That year, the Mayor of Indianapolis authorized a charter for the Indianapolis Metropolitan High School which opened in fall 2004, thus beginning GCSI and GEI’s experience in operating schools.

In 2008, a myriad of catalysts led to GEI leadership exploring opening a school designed specifically for adults. Primarily, the Great Recession led to higher unemployment rates, leaving many individuals finding themselves either unemployed or having difficulty finding jobs that offered family-sustaining wages. Those that were hit hardest by the Recession were often people who never completed high school. Clients already being served by GCSI were struggling to find jobs that did not require at least a high school diploma and employers were also having a difficult time finding employees who met their minimum qualifications. In 2010, to meet the needs of an entire community, GEI opened The Excel Center, a high school designed for adults who previously dropped out of high school and were seeking to re-engage in their education to earn a high school diploma and begin postsecondary education to develop career paths that offer greater employment and career growth opportunities.

Since opening its first Excel Center in 2010, GEI has grown to become the largest charter school operator in the state, operating The Excel Center in 15 locations across central and southern Indiana, as well as the Indianapolis Metropolitan High School.

Community Need

Across the state, there are more than 600,000 Hoosiers over the age of 18 without a high school diploma.¹ The Excel Center has the ability to offer a significant number of these individuals an opportunity to improve their educational attainment. In the Indianapolis area alone, more than 6,000 students drop out of school each year and face a number of challenges that affect their health, continued education, and career potential. An individual who drops out of high school faces a number of challenges that affect his or her current well-being

¹ U.S Census Bureau. American Community Survey, estimates released December 2017.

and future success. High school dropouts have worse health, lower incomes, and fewer job opportunities than the general population.² In addition, high school dropouts are more likely to be recipients of public assistance and are eight times more likely to be incarcerated than high school graduates.³

The impact of dropping out of high schools extends beyond the individual without a high school diploma and also has an impact on the economic stability of a local community. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education, an additional 10,000 high school graduates in Indiana would increase the gross state product by \$100 million dollars, add 800 new jobs, and increase state and local tax revenue by \$4.4 million.⁴ There is a clear and significant need for high schools that serve adults and enable them to earn a high school diploma.

Outcomes

Since 2010, all Excel Centers operated by GEI have achieved “A” or “B” ratings on the state’s adult accountability system in each of the schools’ years of operation. Across The Excel Center network, students enroll with a unique set of challenges and barriers to overcome:

- 80% of students receive at least one form of public assistance;
- Only 11% of students are employed full-time; and
- 45% of students have at least one child under the age of 18.

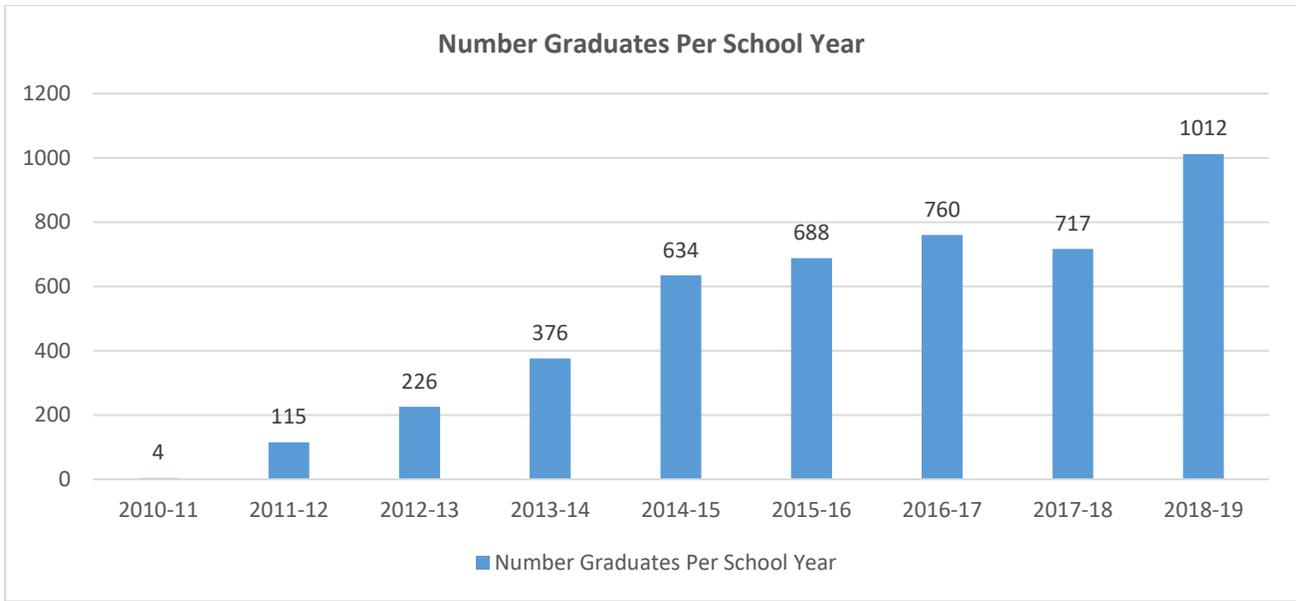
Despite these challenges, The Excel Center has experienced continued and increasing success. Over the past six years The Excel Center has seen a steady increase in both the number of graduates as well as the number of graduates who have achieved postsecondary success.

As of June 2019, The Excel Centers operated by GEI have produced 4,532 graduates. In the most recent school year, 97% of all graduates graduated having earned either dual credit or an industry-recognized credential, with many students earning both. (see table below)

² Gouskova, E. & Stafford, F. (2005). Trends in household wealth dynamics, 2001-2003. Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan. Retrieved from http://psidonline.isr.umich.edu/Publications/Papers/tsp/2005-03_Trends_in_household_01_03_July_05.pdf

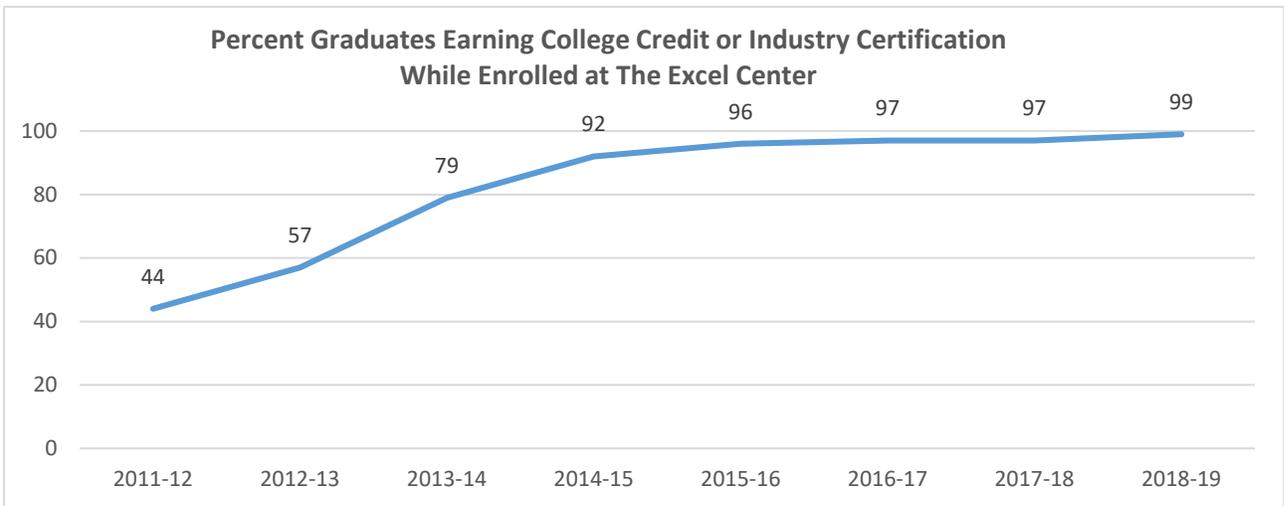
³ Bridgeland, J.M., Dilulio, J.J., & Morison, K.B. (2006). *The silent epidemic: perspectives of high school dropouts*. Washington, DC: Civic Enterprises. Retrieved from <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/nr/downloads/ed/TheSilentEpidemic3-06FINAL.pdf>

⁴ Alliance for Excellent Education (2013). *The economic benefits of increasing the high school graduation rate for public school students in Indiana*. Retrieved from http://impact.all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/IN_2015.pdf



The Excel Center has not only increased its number of graduates each year, it has done so without reducing the quality of graduates. In fact, The Excel Center out-paces Indiana’s state average, ensuring as many students as possible earn an Indiana Core 40 diploma:

- Waiver Diplomas: Excel Center = 6.6%, State Average = 8.3%
- General Diplomas: Excel Center = 4.9%, State Average = 9.5%



A third-party review of The Excel Center’s impact has demonstrated that students’ employment levels and earnings increase significantly as a result of attending the school. Graduating from The Excel Center confers a wage and re-employment effect premium of \$9,828 per graduate. In addition, a graduate from The Excel Center utilizes significantly less money per year in public spending among public assistance programs, leading to an annual savings of \$793.60 per year per student and a total of \$1,898,291 in annual savings yielded by all

graduates of The Excel Center in Indiana.⁵

The Excel Center – Noblesville

Through this charter renewal application, GEI is seeking the full renewal of The Excel Center - Noblesville's charter. Like all other Excel Centers, The Excel Center – Noblesville has a strong history of academic, organizational, and financial performance. The school is a valued asset to the community it serves. The Excel Center – Noblesville has a history of strong performance, having earned an “A” rating on the state’s adult accountability system in each year of the school’s operation. The Excel Center – Noblesville has proudly received “Meets Standard” or “Exceeds Standard” in the majority of appraised categories of the Indiana Charter School Board’s accountability framework. Since opening in the 2015-16 school year, The Excel Center – Noblesville has graduated 219 students. During the most recent school year, 98.9% of all graduates graduated having earned either dual credit or an industry-recognized credential, which is slightly higher than the network’s average and state average.

The results since opening the first Excel Center suggest that Excel Centers are having a positive impact on the state, the local communities where the schools are located, and the individual lives and families of the students served. The full charter renewal of The Excel Center – Noblesville will continue to uplift individuals, their families, and the community.

⁵ Center for Evaluation & Education Policy (March 2017). “The Excel Center Research Report”. Indiana University. Bloomington, Indiana.

Section I: Performance Review

Successes

The Excel Center – Noblesville has marked a number of successes since first opening its doors for the 2015-16 school year. From the inception of Indiana’s adult high school accountability model, The Excel Center – Noblesville has earned an “A” each year for its academic performance. For the 2018-19 school year, The Excel Center – Noblesville demonstrated an adult high school graduation rate of 163% and a College and Career Readiness score of 98.9%. This is consistent with the strong performance The Excel Center – Noblesville has demonstrated in these areas in the school’s four years of operation.

In addition to increasing the annual number of graduates since its inaugural year, The Excel Center – Noblesville has also shown an increase in its Adult High School Graduation Rate, achieving a 62% in the first year of operation (SY 2015-16), and finishing the 2018-19 school year with a rate of 163%. Additionally, The Excel Center – Noblesville has also demonstrated strong outcomes in the school’s CCR rate each year.

The Excel Center – Noblesville				
Graduates, Adult High School Graduation Rate, and CCR Rate				
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Number Graduates per Year	23	60	60	76
Adult High School Graduation Rate	62%	126%	130%	163%
CCR Rate	72%	100%	100%	99%

The Excel Center – Noblesville graduated 76 students in SY 2018-19. Of these 76 graduates, 30 students earned dual credit as well as 57 earned an industry-approved certification, evidencing The Excel Center’s ability to prepare students for both post-secondary education and the workforce.

Performance Dashboard Summary Measures Not Meeting or Exceeding Standard

Based on the Indiana Charter School Board (ICSB) Accountability System, The Excel Center – Noblesville has two areas identified as “Does Not Meet” and one area identified as “Improvement Necessary” within its current dashboard. These metrics are:

- 1.2.a. Students graduate from high school in four years (as defined by the state’s four-year graduation rate).
- 1.2.b. Students enrolled in grade 12 graduate within the school year being assessed.
- 3.2.a. The school met attendance goals.

While 1.2.a. and 1.2.b. are metrics currently identified within the ICSB’s 2018-19 Accountability System Dashboard, The Excel Centers are in a unique position in that their student population is comprised predominantly of adults whose high school cohorts have already exited school. Because the cohorts of adult high schools have already exited school, adult high schools are exempt from a number of accountability measures designed for schools serving traditional-aged students as outlined in the Indiana State Board of Education (SBOE) Adult Accountability

Rule (511 IAC 6.3). This rule was approved by the SBOE in October 2015 and went into effect January 2016.

While The Excel Centers, as adult high schools, are not accountable to these metrics in the same way as high schools for traditional-age students, it is still noteworthy that The Excel Center – Noblesville has improved annually in its 4-year cohort graduation rate based on data available on the Indiana Department of Education’s (IDOE) Compass website.

The table below outlines the 4-year cohort graduation rate improvements at The Excel Center - Noblesville since its opening in SY 2015-16:

The Excel Center – Noblesville 4-Year Graduation Rate Trends				
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate	15%	31%	33%	41%

In its first four years of operation, The Excel Center – Noblesville has almost tripled its 4-year cohort graduation rate, increasing from 15% to 41% in only four years. However, because The Excel Center – Noblesville is an adult high school, a more appropriate measure of the school’s success in helping students graduate is the adult high school graduation rate calculation. The adult high school graduation rate for The Excel Center – Noblesville is exceptionally high (163% for SY 2018-19). In addition to being high for the 2018-19 school year, it is also worth noting that The Excel Center – Noblesville has achieved an adult high school graduation rate of more than 125% in all but its first year of operation (see previous graduation rate table). Similarly, the CCR rate for The Excel Center – Noblesville is also exceptionally high (98.9%), comprised of the percentage of students earning dual credit (40%) or industry certifications (75%). These data demonstrate The Excel Center – Noblesville’s commitment to providing its students with a robust educational experience, resulting in a high quality Indiana diploma for graduates.

In terms of attendance, The Excel Center understands that students who previously left high school before graduating often did so because some type of barrier (or more likely, multiple barriers) interfered with the student’s ability to complete their education. The Excel Center also understands that when these students return to high school as adults, the same barriers (or potentially new barriers) may impede the student’s ability to attend regularly. These barriers may include the need to work to support themselves and their family, caring for a child or relative, taking care of a health-related issue, or other similar issues. These issues can affect students at any time during their tenure at The Excel Center, including when a student is in their final year and preparing to graduate.

In order to support students in dealing with barriers that can impact their success The Excel Center supports its students with Life Coaches. Each student is assigned a Coach, who works closely with that student. The Coach assists the student with creating and monitoring the student’s graduation plan, reaching out to the student when attendance is a problem, and supporting each student in removing or addressing any barriers that may be interfering with the student’s ability to attend regularly. While adult students may still need to miss class more frequently than traditionally-aged high school students in order to address their responsibilities outside of the classroom, additional tutoring sessions and opportunities for weekly support are embedded components of The Excel Center model. These supports can help a student to

maintain their academic work and continue to make progress towards graduation in spite of the pressure of outside obligations.

Additionally, The Excel Center – Noblesville received a “did not meet standard” rating for two standards under Financial Health:

- Standard 1: Current Ratio
- Standard 8: Debt Service Coverage Ratio

Within The Excel Center model, the typical Excel Center serves approximately 300 students. This size school works well in large metropolitan areas or in slightly smaller communities where there is an exceptional number of individual needing a high school diploma. In other communities, while The Excel Center is still needed, we have learned that a smaller school model may be a better fit for the community.

When The Excel Center – Noblesville first opened in the 2015-16 school year, the original charter application called for a 300-student school. GEI’s experience in opening Excel Centers has taught us that it generally takes a few years for a new school to establish itself in the community and reach its enrollment capacity. The Excel Center – Noblesville was no different in this regard, and by year three of operation we realized the 300-seat model was not the appropriate size for the community. As a result, GEI submitted a charter amendment for the school in the fourth year of operation to right-size the charter to an enrollment of 185 students.

The Excel Center – Noblesville not meeting the two financial standards relates to two challenges. The first challenge has to do with the school opening under a charter for 300 students when the “right sized” enrollment for the community is closer to 185. Because the school was planned for 300 students, creating a budget strain due to personnel expenses. Typically, as a new school increases in enrollment over the first few years and then stabilizes at or near capacity, any early budget challenges are resolved. However, in the case of The Excel Center – Noblesville and the need to adjust the charter number to best fit the community, it has taken longer to neutralize the school’s costs.

The Excel Center – Noblesville’s small school structure is the second challenge regarding the school’s ability to meet financial standards. In The Excel Center’s small school model, a large percent of expenses are wrapped up in wages and benefits; therefore it takes longer to remediate any financial issues.

As can be seen with the positive changes over time in these financial standards, the right-sizing of the school coupled with the length of operation in its adjusted small school model is addressing the issue. When looking at performance on both standards, it is clear the metric is very close to being resolved. GEI anticipates these metrics to be positive within the course of approximately a year, and the issue to be completely resolved prior to the next charter renewal cycle.

Section II: Improvement

(1) Sustain and build academic, organizational, and operational success over the next term.

- (a) Governing board**
- (b) Leadership team**
- (c) Teaching staff**
- (d) Academic achievement**

Since its inception, GEI has focused on sustaining success and striving towards continuous improvement in all facets of its operations. GEI has developed numerous plans and processes to sustain the success of The Excel Center – Noblesville, and has a proven track record of sustaining the success of multiple schools. Since opening its first Excel Center in 2010, GEI has grown to become the largest charter school operator in the state, operating Excel Centers in 15 locations across Indiana as well as the Indianapolis Metropolitan High School.

GEI has long demonstrated its ability and capacity to achieve long-term success for each of its schools. This section of The Excel Center – Noblesville’s charter renewal application articulates GEI’s plans and strategies for sustaining and continuing to build academic, organizational, and operational success over The Excel Center – Noblesville’s next charter term in a number of key areas.

(a) Governing Board

The GEI Board of Directors acts as the ultimate governing authority of all fifteen Excel Centers operated by GEI, including The Excel Center - Noblesville. The GEI Board of Directors has operated for over sixteen years and has a long history of operating effectively and in a manner that supports schools to operate with a high degree of success. The Board has long been a model of school governance for other charter schools both locally and outside of Indiana. Over The Excel Center – Noblesville’s next charter term, the Board of Directors plans to maintain its high standard of operation and performance.

GEI’s Board of Directors brings together a considerable array of business experience in industry, public policy, education, finance, and workforce development. Members of the Board of Directors have extensive organizational leadership experience managing for-profit and not-for-profit businesses as well as knowledge of the local community and education landscape.

Board members choose to serve on the GEI Board of Directors for a number of reasons, including a desire to improve the educational systems available to children and adults, a belief in the performance and mission of GEI, helping individuals reach their maximum potential, and hoping to see more individuals earn the basic credential most needed for a successful, productive life – a high school diploma.

The Board concerns itself more with long-term rather than short-term matters, matters of policy rather than operational concerns, and matters of paramount rather than ordinary importance. The Board’s specific responsibilities include:

- Monitoring the school’s key performance indicators;
- Establishing policy;

- Approving long-term plans;
- Approving annual plans and budgets;
- Approving any actions that would create or have the potential to create significant obligations for the schools;
- Ensuring financial solvency;
- Assessing its own performance; and
- Taking other actions as necessary and ensuring that structures and mechanisms are in place to ensure that GEI is in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and contracts, including requirements of the schools' charters.

In addition, the GEI Board of Directors is responsible for periodically (no less than annually) reviewing and evaluating its own performance as well as the relationship between GEI and GCSI. The Board's evaluative nature is directly related to its commitment of continuous improvement and to ensure that all services provided to the schools are meeting quality expectations, providing good value for the school, are enhancing GEI's objective of being a good steward of its state and federal resources, and enabling students to achieve their maximum potential.

Although the Board assumes sole governing authority over The Excel Center, each Excel Center has a Community Advisory Team (CAT). The purpose of the CAT is three-fold: to strengthen partnerships between the local Excel Center and its community members, focus on enrollment and student retention rates, and foster student opportunities such as internships, job training, and pathways to employment. The CAT is responsible for providing input to the local Excel Center on factors that could affect the performance and/or long-term success of each Excel Center location, including major economic changes, changes in the political environment, and any major news. Moreover, the Community Advisory Team provides a community voice to the schools.

The goal is to have Community Advisory Teams meet on a quarterly basis in advance of GEI's Board of Directors meetings, but no fewer than twice annually. The School Director is responsible for managing the relationship between the school and the advisory group and setting the agenda for each meeting. As needed, agendas are developed in collaboration with the Board of Directors or GEI leadership.

(b) Leadership Team

A strong leadership team, including high quality school leaders, is essential to maintaining the success of The Excel Center – Noblesville. In addition to having a high quality leadership team with individual strengths, a high level of collegiality and collaboration amongst the leadership team undoubtedly contributes to the success of The Excel Center – Noblesville. The leadership team at The Excel Center – Noblesville is comprised of:

- School Director: Dr. Steve Dillon
- Manager of Office Administration: Lu Sweeley
- Lead Coach: Amy Kieckbusch
- College and Career Readiness Specialist: Wes Coker
- Lead Teacher: Rachel Zaudtke
- Teacher of Record and English Language Coordinator: Jeanne Meredith

The school-based leadership team at The Excel Center – Noblesville is also supported by the extended leadership team of GEI, which includes the Vice President of Mission & Education,

the Senior Director of The Excel Center & Operations, the Senior Director of Education Initiatives, the Excel Center Regional Director, and other members of the GEI team.

The school-based leadership team meets on a routine basis to discuss leading and lagging indicators of school performance and to collaborate and communicate frequently for collective problem solving as issues arise. Three times a year Excel Centers participate in a network-wide data review, to identify best practice and challenges within performance and capitalize on the expertise of the extended network to problem solve. This allows The Excel Centers to develop initiatives to continuously improve the school model for the benefit of improving student outcomes.

GEI understands that developing and maintaining effective schools means developing and maintaining strong leaders, and as such, GEI has established various training and professional development models to support The Excel Center network and the staff that brings the model to life. In addition to developing and executing staff trainings, it's critical to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of professional development and restructure offerings as needed to ensure they continue to drive the intended outcomes. During the 2016-17 school year, GEI completed a comprehensive review of its various school leadership development offerings. An audit of these programs was conducted to ensure leadership development trainings moved beyond solely focusing on straightforward skill development, and broadened the focus on development of leadership capacity as well. This review of leadership development initiatives resulted in a revision in content for the Technical Leadership Series, a development opportunity offered to new and aspiring Excel Center directors. As a result of the revisions, the training series is now more aptly named the Leadership Series in order to reflect the intentional focus on leadership development. Additionally, GEI's other key leadership development series has now been separated into two distinct tracks. This division will allow the development activities to best align with the specific needs of the participants as it relates to the various roles within GEI. The process of revising these professional development tracks has been a collaborative effort of GEI leadership, GCSI Human Resources, and The Excel Center directors. In addition to these leadership development opportunities, The Excel Center directors participate in monthly Directors' Meetings. These meetings provide ongoing training, development, and information as a means of educating and strengthening the knowledge base of Excel Center directors.

Similar meetings take place on a monthly basis for Excel Center leadership team members. This includes monthly professional development for Lead Teachers, Lead Coaches, Special Education Teachers of Record, and English Language Learner Coordinators. These ongoing sessions allow for training and networking, as well as provide a 'train the trainer' model in which these staff members then return to their schools and share the information with their site-level team members. This structure reinforces GEI's continuous improvement culture, strengthens individual staff members' skills and the team as a whole.

Beyond these activities, The Excel Center – Noblesville team has engaged in a number of professional development activities to continuously hone their professional skillset. These activities include various team members participating in Motivational Interviewing workshops, Resiliency trainings, attending conferences sponsored by national professional organizations, and attending Indiana Department of Education sponsored trainings and conferences. Additionally, one of the Special Education teachers is currently pursuing a Masters Degree in Special Education.

The full staff has engaged in professional development opportunities to support their practices. These trainings have included:

- Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training (Focusing on the safe management of disruptive and assaultive behavior)
- EdgeIX 2018 (People-Center Leadership workshop)
- GEM 2018 (A general professional development conference that focused on the many needs of teachers/coaches within the Excel Center)
- Narcan In-service (Inservice to educate on the signs of overdose and how to properly administer Narcan)
- Internal inservice on students impacted by Trauma
- Internal inservice on Dyslexia
- ALiCE School Safety Training
- Ross Greene Workshop - Collaborative & Proactive Solutions: Understanding and Helping Students with Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Challenges

(c) Teaching staff

At each Excel Center the teaching staff is supported by Lead Teachers, who serve as professional instructional coaches. Lead Teachers play an active role in the development of the teachers' craft by providing feedback and guidance. Additionally, Lead Teachers participate in The Excel Center network-wide monthly Lead Teacher meetings. At these meetings, Lead Teachers share strategies and techniques for supporting teachers, as well as share best practice for what works in their own Excel Center to elicit the best educational outcomes from students.

Lead Teachers also receive support from GEI's Curriculum Services Director, who can work with schools on specific initiatives and areas a school may wish to target. One of the most recent large-scale collaboration projects between the Curriculum Services Director and the Excel Center teachers was the transition to Indiana's Graduation Pathways. Because The Excel Center model focuses on "what comes next" for students, the Graduation Pathways is a natural fit for The Excel Center. In order to make sure Excel Center staff members fully understood Indiana's shift in graduation requirements and what that looked like for The Excel Center, the Curriculum Services Director worked closely with Excel Center leadership and teachers to review all Excel Center requirements and create a crosswalk to the Graduation Pathways. Course content was reviewed, including all related projects and assessments, to ensure The Excel Center was adequately aligning to Indiana's new graduation requirements.

(d) Academic achievement

The Excel Center has identified three main pillars that are critical to sustaining a high level of student academic achievement: (1) an academic philosophy that meets the goals and needs of adult students, (2) a concentrated focus on College and Career Readiness, and (3) a coaching platform designed to address the barriers that may impede a student's continued educational success.

The academic philosophy for students who have dropped out of high school leads to flexibility in the design of the school's academic program. Students enroll at The Excel Center at various skill levels and have a varying number of credits to achieve. Many students will be working to balance their education with life obstacles, including work and family obligations. Therefore, The Excel Center uses a "one student at a time" method where each student establishes his or her educational goals and moves at his or her own pace to achieve learning goals. Every student at The Excel Center has a unique education plan and school staff work

with each student to craft an educational program that fits his or her specific needs.

The environment within The Excel Center is designed to meet adults' learning needs by encouraging them to see the relevance and importance of their education while providing a mature environment for learning and discussion. The school is designed to reflect the characteristics and educational environments that benefit adult learners. Complete College America's 2011 report⁶ "Time is the Enemy" highlights how, for many adults in college, an extended period of time to progress through school is a major detriment to their lasting success. Although the report's findings focus on postsecondary education, its lessons about adult learners have been incorporated into the design of The Excel Center. For students who are balancing commute times, family obligations, work, and school, lengthy educational programs with few rewards are a major barrier to ongoing success. The following elements of Complete College America's recommendations have been incorporated into the academic design of The Excel Center:

- *Use of block schedules with fixed and predictable classroom meeting times.* The Excel Centers classes operate for 90 or 180 minutes each day.
- *Allow students to proceed at a faster pace, with shorter academic terms, less time of between terms, and year-round scheduling.* The Excel Center's year-round calendar takes minimal breaks and operates on five terms lasting for at least 8 weeks each.
- *Simplify the registration process.* Students enroll in one coherent program during iExcel (student orientation) and receive substantial help from life coaches, teachers, and other staff to understand their path to earn a high school diploma and an industry-recognized credential and/or college credits.
- *Form peer support and learning networks.* Students build relationships with other students and teachers in The Excel Center's small school environment. Additionally, life coaches work to ensure students remain engaged in the school's academic program and feel connected to, and like they belong, in the school.
- *Embed remediation into the regular educational design so that students don't waste time before they start earning credits.* The Excel Center has established a learning environment that meets adults where they are academically. Students participate in fixed-time classes where they cover key academic subjects in language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. These courses are designed to build skills, teach material, and engage with students. Many students come to The Excel Center requiring significant remediation and special supports. For these students, reading, math, and basic skills labs allow them to learn critical information when they need it. Foundational courses allow students to earn elective credit, helping students connect their remedial work to the goal of earning credits towards their high school diplomas.

The Excel Center's focus on College and Career Readiness prepares students to learn the general skills necessary to become successful in the 21st century workplace. The Partnership for 21st Century Learning developed a framework that identified many of the critical competencies and skills essential to students preparing to enter the workforce in the 21st century.⁷ These skills are grouped into four general categories:

- (1) A strong mastery of key subjects and 21st century themes;
- (2) Life and career skills;
- (3) Learning and innovation skills; and

⁶ Complete College America (2011). *Time is the Enemy: The surprising truth about why today's college students aren't graduating. . . and what needs to change.* Washington DC: Complete College America. Retrieved from http://www.completecollege.org/docs/Time_Is_The_Enemy.pdf

⁷ Partnership for 21st Century Learning. Framework for 21st Century Learning. Retrieved from <http://www.battleforkids.org/networks/p21/frameworks-resources>

(4) Information, media, and technology skills.

Building upon Indiana Academic Standards, The Excel Center emphasizes these skills so that students are prepared for the modern workforce. Students will build on themes and case studies applied in workplace contexts, encouraging students to develop and demonstrate skills that will be valuable in workplace environments. Opportunities for students to demonstrate these skills are woven into core content and school progress. The school's emphasis on these skills enables each student to understand how mastery of the core curriculum can be used as a means to develop skills that will be important in his or her career.

Many individuals who have dropped out of school will re-enter the educational system when they find that there are few employment opportunities available for individuals who lack a high school diploma. To respond to this demand, The Excel Center's coursework and learning environment enables students to access greater career opportunities. Intrinsic to The Excel Center school model is the graduation requirement of students participating in at least one dual credit or industry certification course. As our students are adults and often focused on "what comes next" after their diploma, this has always been a key element of The Excel Center model and something Excel Centers have implemented long before Indiana's transition to the Graduation Pathways. This requirement encourages the pursuit of a post-secondary education for greater career opportunities. The vast majority of these offerings are provided in cooperation with Ivy Tech. The additional Excel Center graduation requirement of post-secondary coursework not only gives students a taste of college and a confidence in their ability to complete college-level work, but often provides a transferable credential in a high demand career field, increasing a student's employment opportunities. Through dual credit classes, students can begin their post-secondary career with earned credits toward their degree.

The Excel Center's academic environment is designed to prepare students for post-secondary education, which requires self-direction, initiative, and personal discipline. The Excel Center promotes students' awareness and access to valuable careers by introducing students to the benefits, details, and possibilities of a number of careers, and helping to outline the path a student may take to enter a career in a given field. The Excel Center spends significant amounts of time introducing students to industries and fields where there are good prospects of finding stable employment and finding a career in an industry with growth potential. The school will provide a variety of academic opportunities for growth that fit students' needs and learning styles. In order to allow students the freedom to explore these goals, students will determine the pace and, to some degree, content (depending on their career interests) of their academic program.

The Excel Center's coaching platform addresses the life barriers and issues that may prevent a students from meeting their goals and achieving academic success. The Excel Center's life coaches are responsible for keeping students engaged and motivated in the school. The relationship that coaches create with each student is a critical factor in student success as that relationship provides security, confidence, and encouragement for students to continue

when the school work becomes difficult and life barriers become challenging to manage. Life coaches work with students to identify potential barriers to students' continued education, whether short-term (such as housing and childcare) or long-term (including self-confidence or emotional issues). The coach is responsible for student advocacy, barrier removal, community partnerships, and academic counseling.

(2) Identify any particular weaknesses, challenges, areas for improvement, and detail school's plan for addressing these needs.

The Excel Center school model is innovative in that it is a first-of-its-kind adult high school, which creates an opportunity for those who previously dropped out of high school to re-engage in their education and earn a full, state-recognized high school diploma. The Excel Center was the first adult high school in Indiana and the first-of-its-kind in the nation. Furthermore, The Excel Center's approach to education is innovative in that it provides wraparound services to students to allow them to overcome both academic and non-academic barriers to their educational success and future educational and career attainment.

Related to removing student barriers, in its second year of operation, staff at The Excel Center – Noblesville noted a challenge with student retention, realizing that a number of students would leave the school within the first week or two of starting classes. During that year, school leadership conducted a root cause analysis and discovered that special education students were predominantly leaving The Excel Center – Noblesville during this two-week window after starting classes. During that school year (SY 2016-17), the number of special education students at The Excel Center – Noblesville was less than the state and national average, but the fact that this was the main population of students exiting the school shortly after starting classes was cause for concern.

As a result of discovering special education students were largely leaving during the first two weeks of beginning classes, The Excel Center – Noblesville developed a plan to address this issue and provide additional supports even beyond those of the extensive barrier removal intrinsic to The Excel Center model. The Excel Center – Noblesville restructured its staffing model in order to hire an additional special education teacher. With two special education teachers on staff, the special education students could receive an even greater level of interaction to ensure their needs were being met. By having smaller caseloads, the special education teachers now had additional time to develop relationships with these students in an effort to help them connect with the school and ensure The Excel Center – Noblesville was adequately meeting their needs. Because the special education students were testing into remedial level courses, the two special education teachers were assigned to teach those courses – providing a teacher with whom the students were already becoming familiar, and as their Teacher of Record, a teacher who would already be aware of the students' specific needs and how best to meet them. And finally, the special education teachers would also serve as these students' coaches, thus providing full wraparound services to the students.

The Excel Center – Noblesville has completed two years implementing this strategy and per the school director, the number of special education students leaving during the first two weeks of starting class has improved but has not completely resolved. One nuance to this issue is that in its four years of operation, The Excel Center – Noblesville has seen a greater than six percent increase in special education student enrollment at the school. During its first year of operation, when this issue was identified, special education students comprised 12.4% of the student population (which was less than the national average at the time). As of SY 2018-19, special

education students comprised 18.8% of the school population, which is greater than the national average and a 6.4% increase in special education students at the school over four years. With this being the fifth year of the school's operation and the beginning of the third year implementing the strategy, school staff will continue to evaluate the number of special education students leaving shortly after starting with The Excel Center-Noblesville and continue to adjust interventions to best address students' needs.

Related to the prior issue, a second challenge the school has identified corresponds to the school's large number of special education students and English language learners. As mentioned previously, in only four years of operation The Excel Center – Noblesville has seen a 6.4% increase in the number of special education students enrolled at the school. This increase has shifted the school from a percentage below the national average to one more than 4% over (18.8% in SY 2018-19) the national average of special education students. Additionally, the school serves a large population of English learners (16.8% in SY 2018-19) as compared to the national average of 9.1%.

While The Excel Center model is designed to support students with various barriers, including students with disabilities and English language learners, the unique challenge for The Excel Center – Noblesville is that the school is one of GEI's small schools, operating with an enrollment closer to 185, as compared to the model's typical 300-student school. This smaller school structure, better suited to meet the Noblesville community's enrollment needs, means that the school has fewer staff members than an Excel Center for 300 students. One strategy that has already been put in place that supports the increase in special education students and the large number of English learners is the school's hiring of an additional special education teacher. The additional special education staff member serves as Teacher of Record for half of the special education students, and is currently pursuing a Masters Degree in Special Education to increase her level of expertise. Additionally, this staff member is also bilingual, so the goal is for this staff member to transition the English language learner services to her as well.

As the increase in special education students is significant for such a short period of time, The Excel Center – Noblesville is currently evaluating the data to identify additional strategies to best support these two populations of students. School leadership is aware that the staff will need training in order to develop a program to best meet students' needs, and the data analysis will help guide next steps in the process.

(3) Any additional evidence, beyond data in dashboard, that supports school's case for renewal.

All evidence and explanation is provided throughout the other sections of this renewal application.

Section III: Proposed Changes to Charter Agreement

No proposed changes to the charter agreement are requested at this time.

The Excel Center – Noblesville

Budget Narrative

State Funding:

Funding levels are assumed to remain at \$6,750 by ICSB. That would push the same per pupil funding out nearly 10 years, which does not seem likely. This assumption is highly conservative and as such, most expenses were also held at little to no growth.

Federal Funding:

Federal funding includes funding through the Part B Federal Special Education grants. Funding within the five-year budget is projected to remain flat.

Inflation:

While certain expenses are likely to increase annually due to inflation. The budget model is using fairly flat expenses through the 5 year period except for salary and wage cost which were assumed to increase 3% per year.

Salaries/Wages:

As noted above, salaries and wages are assumed to increase approximately 3% per year. In the current job market we have not seen significant savings when positions turn over, so the 3% is assumed on the current staffing mix.

Professional Fees:

Average expenditures from the last two years were used to develop the 5-year projection. Expenses, such as internet, were budgeted at full cost rather than the discounted e-rate expense.

Depreciation:

Depreciation averages \$100k per year currently. With the original furniture and equipment coming to the end of its depreciable life, we will see a reduction in depreciation as we have just refreshed technology and very little furniture needs replaced.

Rent and Occupancy:

Our landlord, Ivy Tech, has to this point been willing to renew our lease without increase as they do not need the space.

ICSB Administrative Fee:

The formula appears to have an error as the amount populating the budget is 5% instead of 0.5%, this is causing a significantly higher number in that line.

Exhibit C

Statement of Assurances

The charter school agrees to comply with all of the following provisions: *(Read and check)*

- 1. A resolution or motion has been adopted by the charter school applicant's governing body that authorizes the submission of this application, including all understanding and assurances contained herein, directing and authorizing the applicant's designated representative to act in connection with the application and to provide such additional information as required.
- 2. Recipients operate (or will operate if not yet open) a charter school in compliance with all federal and state laws, including Indiana Charter Schools Law as described in all relevant sections of IC § 20-24.
- 3. Recipients will, for the life of the charter, participate in all data reporting and evaluation activities as required by ICSB and IDOE. See in particular IC § 20-20-8-3 and relevant sections of IC § 20-24.
- 4. Recipients will comply with all relevant federal laws including, but not limited to, the *Age Discrimination in Employment Act* of 1975, Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act* of 1964, Title IX of the *Education Amendments of 1972*, section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act* of 1973, Part B of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, and section 427 of the *General Education Provision Act*.
- 5. Recipients will comply with all provisions of the Non regulatory Guidance—Public Charter Schools Program of the U.S. Department of Education, which includes the use of a lottery for enrollment if the charter school is oversubscribed, as well as with applicable Indiana law. See also relevant sections of IC § 20-24.
- 6. Recipients shall ensure that a student's records, and, if applicable, a student's individualized education program as defined at 20 U.S.C. § 1401(14) of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, will follow the student, in accordance with applicable federal and state law.
- 7. Recipients will comply with all provisions of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 ("ESSA")*, including but not limited to, provisions on school prayer, the Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act, the Armed Forces Recruiter Access to Students and Student Recruiting Information, the Unsafe School Choice Option, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA") and assessments.
- 8. Recipients will operate with the organizer serving in the capacity of fiscal agent for the charter school and in compliance with generally accepted accounting principles.
- 9. Recipients will at all times maintain all necessary and appropriate insurance coverage.

- 10. Recipients will indemnify and hold harmless ICSB, the State of Indiana, all school corporations providing funds to the charter school (if applicable), and their officers, directors, agents and employees, and any successors and assigns from any and all liability, cause of action, or other injury or damage in any way relating to the charter school or its operation.
- 11. Recipients understand that ICSB may revoke the charter if ICSB deems that the recipient is not fulfilling the academic goals, fiscal management, or legal and operational responsibilities outlined in the charter.

I, the undersigned, am an authorized representative of the charter school applicant and do hereby certify that the information submitted in this application is accurate and true to the best of my knowledge and belief. In addition, I do hereby certify to the assurances contained above.

BETSY DELGADO

Name

Betsy Delgado

Signature

10/8/19

Date