

Exhibit B

**Renewal Application 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 - Bloomington

**Charter School Address:** 2088 Liberty Drive Bloomington, IN 47403

**Designated Representative and Contact Information (Phone & Email):** Betsy Delgado, (317) 524-4280, bdelgado@goodwillindy.org

**Mission Statement:** We change lives every day by empowering people to increase their independence and reach their potential through education, health and employment

**School Leader/Principal:** Twyla Carlson

Current Board of Directors	
Gita Baker, Chair	Jay Oliver
Doris L. Pryor, Vice-Chair	Don Palmer
Laura Pickett, Secretary	Joshua Shelton
Kofi Barko	
Garland Graves	
C. Perry Griffith, Jr.	

**Grade Levels and Student Enrollment**

Complete Tab 1 of either the Enrollment Plan for K-12 Schools or the Enrollment Plan for Adult High Schools, as applicable. Please ensure that you are completing the correct Enrollment Plan.

**Identify ESP or partner organization (if applicable):** Goodwill Education Initiatives



## **The Excel Center - Bloomington**

Application for Charter Renewal

October 2023

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

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**Please Note:**

The following item is provided as separate Excel Spreadsheets to this document:

- Budget & Staffing Workbook

# 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 (GEI), through The Excel Center, is to deliver on the mission of Goodwill of Central and Southern Indiana (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, Goodwill of Central and Southern Indiana, Inc. leadership created Goodwill Education Initiatives, Inc., 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 of 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 struggling to find 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 to 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 16 locations across central and southern Indiana as well as the Indianapolis Metropolitan High School. In addition to operating 17 schools, GEI is licensing The Excel Center school model to 10 other Goodwill organizations and supporting 40 other Excel Centers across the country, with more organizations and schools in the pipeline.



## Community Need

Across the state, there are more than 450,000 working-age Hoosiers without a high school diploma.<sup>1</sup> The Excel Center has the ability to offer a significant number of these individuals an opportunity to improve their educational attainment. In Marion County, nearly 11.8% of the adult population does not have a high school diploma.<sup>2</sup> An individual who drops out of high school faces a number of challenges that affect his or her current well-being and future success. High school dropouts have worse health, lower incomes, and fewer job opportunities than the general population.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

The impact of dropping out of high school 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.<sup>5</sup> 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 that grades were awarded and produced over 8,000 graduates. In the most recent school year, 99.6% of all graduates graduated having earned either dual credit or an industry-recognized credential, with many students earning both. 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. Through evidence-based evaluation, The Laboratory of Economic Opportunity (LEO) at the University of Notre Dame has found that graduating from The Excel Center has an overwhelmingly positive effect on both the student and the State. This effect includes: increase in workforce participation, increased quarterly earnings, transition from retail and hospitality based employment to healthcare and manufacturing, and that these effects are experienced by all graduates regardless of race, gender, or geography.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, estimates released December 2017.

<sup>2</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2021). Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/>

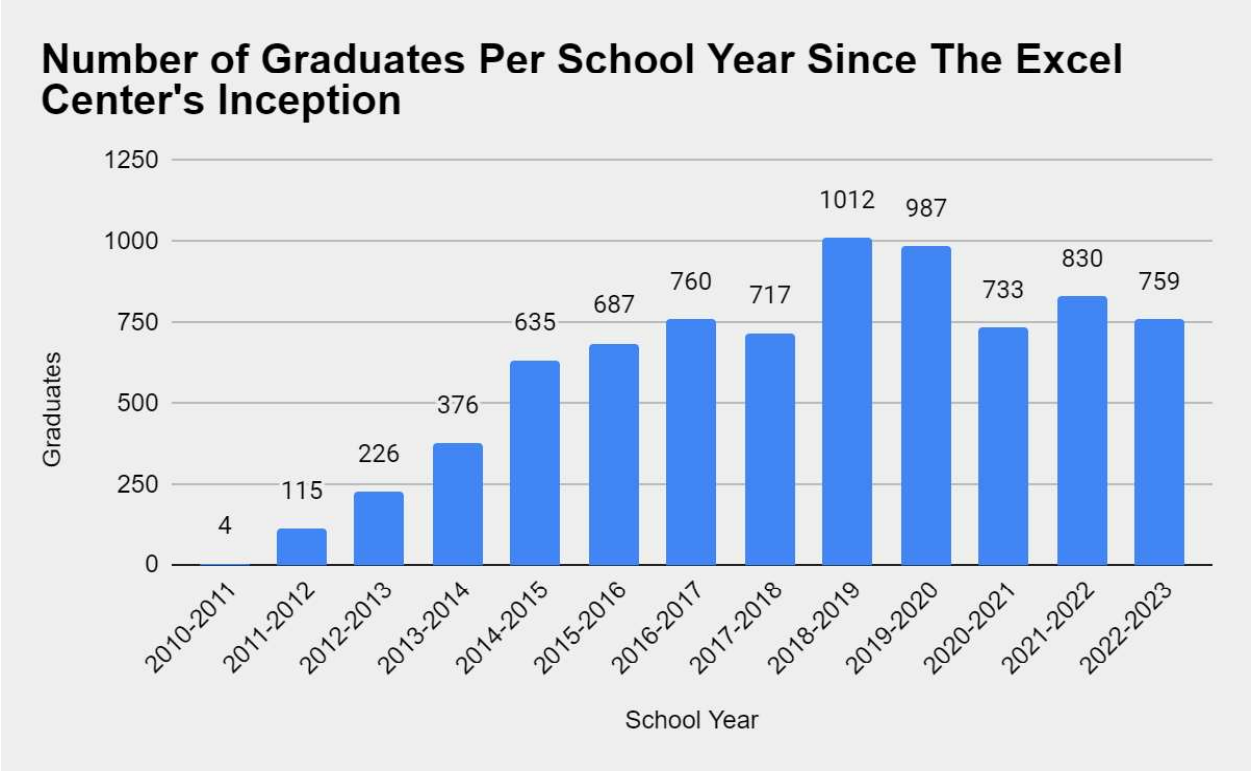
<sup>3</sup> Gouskova, E. & Stafford, F. (2005). Trends in household wealth dynamics, 2001-2003. Ann Arbor. Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan. Retrieved from [http://psidonline.isr.umich.edu/Publications/Papers/tsp/2005-03\\_Trends\\_in\\_household\\_01\\_03\\_July\\_05.pdf](http://psidonline.isr.umich.edu/Publications/Papers/tsp/2005-03_Trends_in_household_01_03_July_05.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Bridgeland, J.M., Dilulio, J.J., & Morison, K.B. (2006). *The silent epidemic: perspectives of high school dropouts*. Washington, DC: Civic Enterprises. Retrieved from <https://docs.gatesfoundation.org/Documents/thesilentepidemic3-06final.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Alliance for Excellent Education (2013). *The economic benefits of increasing the high school graduation rate for public school students in Indiana*. Retrieved from [https://all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Indiana\\_hs.pdf](https://all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Indiana_hs.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Brough+Phillips+Turner (2023). High Schools Tailored To Adults Can Help Them Complete a Traditional Diploma and Excel in the Labor Market. Laboratory for Economic Opportunity, University of Notre Dame.

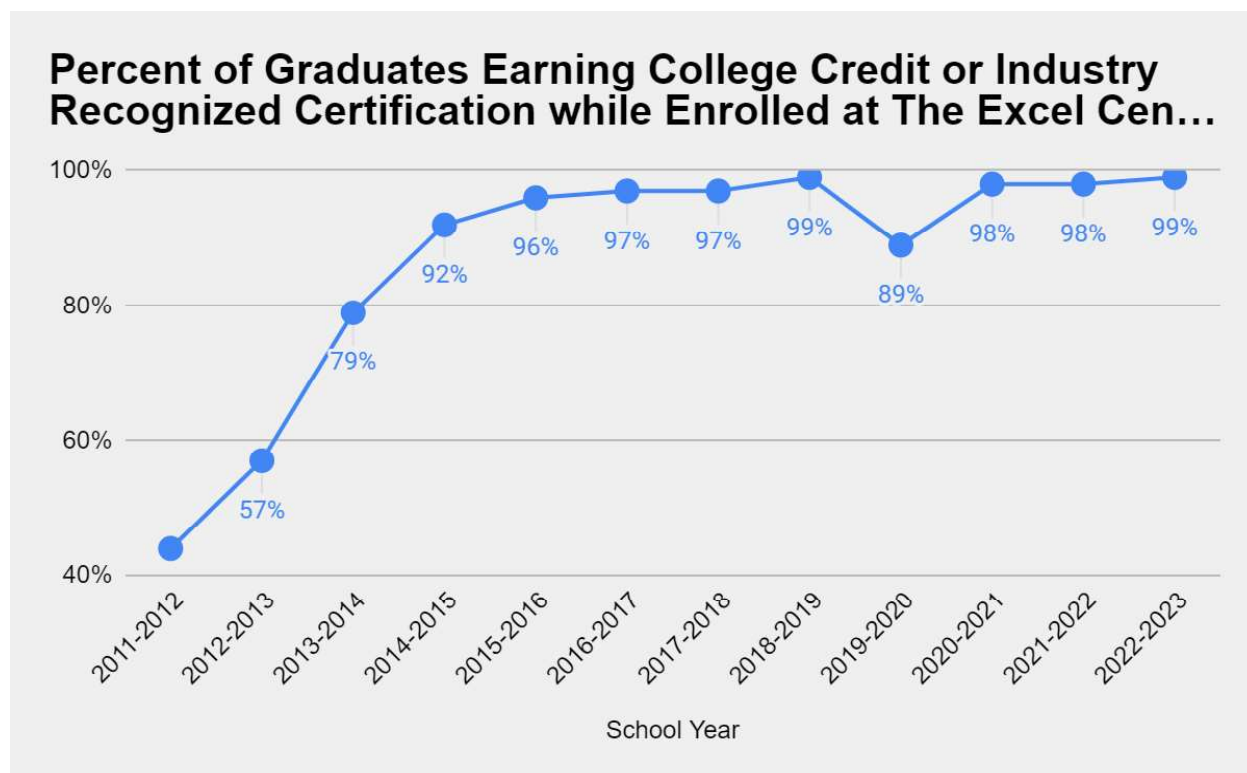
**Chart 1.** Number of graduates per school year since The Excel Center’s inception



***\*Note:** SY2019-20 and SY2020-21 were severely disrupted by COVID -19. All educational opportunities shifted suddenly to virtual instruction in March 2020 and remained that way for the duration of the 2019-20 school year. Students returned to a hybrid structure for 2020-21; however, this still had a significant impact on students.*

Aside from the number of graduates completing their diploma during the COVID-19 pandemic, The Excel Center saw a consistent increase in the number of graduates. Throughout The Excel Center’s existence, even while numbers of graduates have increased, the schools have maintained high quality graduation requirements, as supported by the percentage of Excel Center graduates leaving school with a dual credit, industry-recognized credential, or both.

**Chart 2.** Percent graduates earning college credit or industry certification while enrolled at The Excel Center



*\*Note: SY2019-20 and SY2020-21 were severely disrupted by COVID -19, when all educational opportunities suddenly shifted to virtual instruction in March 2020. Students' ability to earn certifications was impacted when most certification providers were not able to offer certification assessments in a virtual format.*

In its commitment to the success of The Excel Center and its impact on the individuals and communities it serves, over the years GEI has engaged with third-party entities to assess the impact of the work. In 2017, a third-party review of The Excel Center's impact demonstrated that students' employment levels and earnings increase significantly as a result of attending the school. After graduation, 70% of students are employed and have a 50% wage increase within 6 months, which 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.<sup>7</sup>

Most recently, in 2021 GEI engaged with the Laboratory for Economic Opportunity (LEO) through the University of Notre Dame to evaluate outcomes of The Excel Center. This project identified a number of key findings, including:

- Excel Center graduates experience a 40% increase in employment compared to before they enrolled, and a 20% greater workforce participation than their peers.

<sup>7</sup> Center for Evaluation & Education Policy (March 2017). "The Excel Center Research Report". Indiana University. Bloomington, Indiana.

- Excel center graduates experience a 39% increase in earnings compared to those without a diploma.
- Excel Center graduates outperform their peers who earn a high school equivalency (HSE) in wages by more than 400% annually.
- Excel Center graduate employment and wage benefits are experienced equitably across gender, race, social-economic, and geographical groups.<sup>8</sup>

The results since opening the first Excel Center suggest that Excel Centers are positively impacting 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 – Bloomington will continue to uplift students, their families, and the community.

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<sup>8</sup> Laboratory for Economic Opportunity (2021). “Labor Market Return: Quasi-Control Study (Indiana)”. University of Notre Dame. Notre Dame, Indiana.

## Section I: Performance Review

### Successes

The Excel Center – Bloomington has marked a number of successes since first opening its doors for the 2019-20 school year. The Excel Center – Bloomington takes pride in serving Monroe County and meeting the needs of a diverse group of learners. As the student population and its needs have shifted during the time the school has been in operation, school staff has been intentional in building in professional development and community partnerships based in trauma-informed care, crisis prevention and Intervention, mental health, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. For each of the school's four years of operation, The Excel Center – Bloomington has earned an "A" or "B" rating based on Indiana's adult high school accountability model.

**Table 1**

<b>The Excel Center – Bloomington Enrollment Overview</b>				
	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>
<b>Average Enrollment</b>	123	164	101	126
<b>Special Education</b>	7.7%	6.15%	6.67%	7.62%
<b>English Learners</b>	3.4%	2.69%	4.62%	8.10%

*\*Note: SY2019-20 was severely disrupted by COVID-19, requiring all educational opportunities to suddenly shift to virtual instruction. Students' ability to earn certifications was impacted when most certification providers were not able to offer certification assessments in a virtual format. SY2020-21 was also impacted, when the school used a hybrid instructional model and the inability to connect with all students face to face affected the school's ability to connect with students and help remove barriers.*

The Excel Center – Bloomington's College and Career Readiness (CCR) rate has been a strong indicator of graduate quality throughout the school's initial charter. While the 2019-20 CCR rate is still very strong at 80%, this was by far the lowest CCR rate since the school's opening, demonstrating the outcome was more a reflection on the impact of COVID-19 rather than the school's performance. In the most recent school year, 27 of the 28 graduates earned either an industry-recognized certification (17 students) or dual credits (11 students). The certifications earned come from a variety of fields of employment including: Home Health Aide, Pharmacy Technician, Certified Nursing Assistant, IT Fundamentals, Medical Interpreting, and Construction (Table 2).

**Table 2**

<b>The Excel Center – Bloomington Graduates and College &amp; Career Readiness Rate</b>				
	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>
<b>Number Graduates per Year</b>	12	26	14	28
<b>College &amp; Career Readiness Rate</b>	80%	100%	100%	96%

As of the spring of 2022, The Excel Center – Bloomington reached the milestone of helping 80 Hoosiers who had previously left high school to earn their Indiana high school diploma. Of those 80 graduates, on average 96% have left the school earning a dual credit, industry recognized credential, or both.

On the ICSB 5-year Accountability Dashboard, The Excel Center – Bloomington has earned “Exceeds Standard” on CCR Percentage of the Adult High School Accountability section for all years of the charter. The school has also received “Meets Standard” (the highest level for this section) for each component of the Organizational & Operational Accountability section of the ICSB dashboard in every year of the charter.

## **Performance Dashboard Summary Measures Not Meeting or Exceeding Standard**

### **a) Financial Accountability Metrics**

In addition to these successes, The Excel Center – Bloomington is committed to addressing items identified within the Indiana Charter School Board (ICSB) Accountability System Dashboard needing improvement. The school received a rating of “Does Not Meet Standard” in the areas of Current Ratio, Days Cash on Hand, Annual Enrollment Change, Primary Reserve Ratio, Change in Net Assets Margin, and Aggregated Three-Year Margin, Debt to Asset Ratio on the Financial Accountability Metrics portion of the ICSB dashboard. As these metrics are intertwined, our response is comprehensive to the overall issues.

When The Excel Center – Bloomington opened its doors for the 2019-20 school year, it benefitted from the financial strength of The Excel Center network and accessed intercompany loans to build out the space for the school. In addition, The Excel Center - Bloomington was the recipient of the CSP grant which also helped cover much of the remaining costs of start-up.

During the second year of operation (SY 2020-21), the school experienced a unique situation in which there were still seats available in the school’s charter but no available seats within the network. That issue, when combined with the challenges of COVID-19, had a significant impact on the school’s ability to integrate into the community, as well as significantly grow enrollment. Enrollment was able to grow over 19/20 due to the virtual setting drawing students from communities surrounding the Bloomington area.

Our network typically sees our enrollment stabilize by year three or year four. Due to the initial setbacks related to the pandemic, this will likely take at least 2-3 years longer in Bloomington. Fairly modest growth in enrollment will allow payback to begin on the intercompany payable. Days cash on hand has met standards since year two, and paying down the intercompany payable will positively affect the standards related to the statement of net assets.

GEI’s practice is to depreciate leasehold improvements (the build out) over the life of the lease or the length of the charter, whichever is shorter. As such, there will be little to no depreciation remaining during the five-year projection. A modest increase in enrollment and the reduction in depreciation should bring the standards related to the statement of changes in net assets back to “meets standards” by the end of the projection.

Many of the other services and initiatives discussed elsewhere will contribute to improved enrollment, but we will continue to invest in marketing the Excel Center - Bloomington as well as building relationships with the area schools. We anticipate some of our work currently being

done with the Laboratory for Economic Opportunity, University of Notre Dame, around the area of applications and enrollment will be useful in becoming more effective in recruiting and enrolling area students.

## **b) Attendance**

The Excel Center model was designed as an accelerated model that supports students through in-person instruction. During the first year of operation in 2019, The Excel Center - Bloomington was able to generate interest in the model and services. However, shortly after the shutdown, the school was required to pivot and rethink on how to serve students in a new element. The pandemic's impact was not only immediate, but had subsequent consequences as the school was only beginning to set its norms, practices, and high levels of student performance. There are three factors that have played a role in influencing the attendance rate (1) the impact of Covid-19, (2) competition for student's time between school and employment, and (3) the issue of chronic absenteeism across the state. Here are the details of those factors and the established solutions.

### **1) Impact of Covid-19**

The Excel Center - Bloomington had to quickly shift to virtual learning in response to state and city mandates. The transition posed a great deal of challenges for students including accessing technology, maintaining engagement, and adapting to remote learning. These challenges were particularly difficult because the targeted population, who often have academic skills below 6th-grade level in reading, writing and math, intentionally selected an institution that values in-person instruction. Students who remained committed to their educational journey became accustomed to alternative schedules and learning environments that were eventually phased out and demanded more of their time.

As the school shifted to its existing model, adult students struggled with the complexities of continuing their education while attending to children whose school environments had many shifts, as well. As the pandemic continued, life challenges impeded on the mental health of many students. The National Center for Education Statistics reported, "Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, public schools have seen an increase in mental health concerns among their students. Seventy percent of public schools reported an increase in the percentage of their students seeking mental health services at school."<sup>9</sup> This unique dilemma impacts adult learners two fold---(1) attending to their mental health and (2) many supporting the social, emotional and mental well-being of their children; sixty-four percent of The Excel Center students have school aged children.

**Strategy:** The Excel Center places a primary focus on meeting students where they are. In response to the challenges brought on by the pandemic, several initiatives have been put into action to address and alleviate these growing concerns. These initiatives include the identification of partnerships that provide mental health services and the enhancement of staff knowledge through intentional training. Recognizing that students with social, emotional and mental health issues are less inclined to engage in learning and attend school, a deeper understanding of the challenges they face outside of the classroom has become imperative. Through

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<sup>9</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. (2022, May 31). Press release - roughly half of public schools report that they can effectively provide mental health services to all students in need - may 31, 2022. [https://nces.ed.gov/whatsnew/press\\_releases/05\\_31\\_2022\\_2.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/whatsnew/press_releases/05_31_2022_2.asp)

one-on-one and coaching sessions, Excel Center life coaches can identify students grappling with mental health issues. Collaborating with providers enables students to access resources to address their immediate needs at no cost. In year one, nearly 30% of students were referred for services.

Furthermore, staff are regularly participating in training that encompasses trauma-informed responses, diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, among other areas. These trainings aim to enhance staffs' capacity to identify, address and respond to the unique and diverse concerns of students. By offering additional professional development tailored to these needs, removing obstacles to accessing mental health services, including associated cost through barrier removal funding, the Excel Center - Bloomington is committed to improving student attendance.

## **2) Workforce Competition**

Amidst the backdrop of rising unemployment rates across the state, The Excel Center students recognized a pivotal choice before them, one that challenges them to address their immediate needs versus long-term aspirations. This shifting economic landscape has presented opportunities, including growing job vacancies and rising wages, which undoubtedly has the ability to improve students' financial well-being. Consequently, it has become abundantly clear that the decision between attending school and entering the workforce has impacted the level of engagement of Excel Center students. The school understands firsthand how important these decisions are and the impact it has on students' ability to attend. These decisions require staff to be strategic in helping students find a balance between their need for money right now and their long-term goals for education and career.

Strategy: The Excel Center's strategy to tackle this challenge is deeply rooted in understanding that when students' fundamental needs are unmet, their chances of attending school decrease. Convincing students to choose long-term financial solutions over short-term gains has become increasingly imperative. To confront this challenge, the school has placed an emphasis on the importance of high school attendance and completion by highlighting benefits while attending school and post-graduation. The Excel Center's long-standing dedication to evidence-based research and consistent high-quality outcomes further proves this commitment. In collaboration with the Laboratory of Economic Opportunity (LEO) at the University of Notre Dame, the institution has conducted comprehensive research that unequivocally demonstrates the significant financial benefits of attending and graduating from The Excel Center. The study findings reveal that students who attend and graduate experience a remarkable 39% higher wage growth compared to their peers, a testament to the vital academic knowledge and the development of technical and soft skills they acquire during their educational journey.

In the realm of choice between attending school and seeking immediate employment, The Excel Center - Bloomington has chosen to emphasize the significance of school attendance, particularly in light of the financial benefits that students can reap in the long run. The institution's approach to addressing this challenge revolves around the strategic cultivation of partnerships with local employers such as Cook Medical, Roto Rooter, Brown County Resource Center and more. These symbiotic relationships allow the school to provide adult learners with the direct technical skills and essential soft skills required for job sustainability. In addition, it allows students to expand their pool of job



opportunities with employers who were once viewed as unattainable. By working closely with the College and Career Specialists, students gain valuable insights into the labor market, identify potential career pathways, and receive support in navigating their journey towards these employment prospects. As a testament to this intentionality, The Excel Center - Bloomington alumni proudly boast the third-highest wage earnings among all 16 Excel Center schools, reinforcing the significant impact of these employer partnerships. Moreover, their graduates report the fewest barriers to overcome post-graduation, as they are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to excel in a competitive job market. The Excel Center excels in showcasing the immediate and long-term benefits of choosing attending over immediate employment, offering not just knowledge but a transformative pathway to sustainable financial well-being.

### **3) Chronic Absenteeism**

Chronic absenteeism has been a pressing concern in the state of Indiana, with data from the State Board of Education (SBOE) revealing a widespread issue during the past years. Alarming, 1,651 Indiana schools reported that one in ten students were chronically absent<sup>10</sup>, which is a concerning statistic that reflects significant obstacles for all schools educating and graduating students. The issue of chronic absenteeism has significantly affected The Excel Center-Bloomington attendance rates, requiring the distinctive role of the The Excel Center model to the forefront.

The Excel Center was specifically designed for a distinct group of individuals who have previously dropped out of high school or have fallen behind in their cohort, thereby facing various challenges prior to enrollment. A notable challenge among this group is a pattern of non-attendance. For instance, students aged 16-17 missed an average of 51.25 school days before enrolling at the Excel Center-Bloomington. The United States Department of Education research suggests, “the reasons for chronic absenteeism are as varied as the challenges our students and families face—including poor health, limited transportation, and a lack of safety — which can be particularly acute in disadvantaged communities and areas of poverty.”<sup>11</sup> These factors indicate a need for a holistic approach to support both youth and adult learners. The Excel Center recognizes that chronic absenteeism can be a significant roadblock to academic success, and remains committed to finding viable solutions to tackle the issue.

Strategy: To combat the problem of low attendance, three key strategies were implemented: providing resource support, enhancing accountability and improving outcomes for those who regularly attend. As the Department of Education indicated, chronic absenteeism is often linked to common issues related to poverty. To tackle growing concerns of housing instability, food insecurity and unmet basic needs among adult students, however not excluding minors, additional funding was allocated to remove barriers. The funding source provides up to \$2,500 per student each 12-month calendar year to address concerns and support students in maintaining continuous attendance. In addition to financial resources, addressing accountability for students' lack of attendance is essential. The Excel Center team regularly collaborates with community partners to explore strategies that could lead

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<sup>10</sup> Student Attendance & Indiana's New Early Warning Dashboard. (2023, October 24). Retrieved October 17, 2023, from <https://www.in.gov/sboe/files/10.4.23-SBOE-slides.pptx.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> U.S Department of Education. (n.d.). *Chronic absenteeism in the nation's schools*. Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools. <https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/chronicabsenteeism.html#one>

to improved attendance. A significant partnership has been formed with the Monroe County Probation Department to address attendance issues for minor students. Through this collaboration, a tiered attendance intervention plan has been developed to support both youth and adult students. It outlines intentional points of communication, home visits, wrap-around support, re-engagement and more. When these tactics are ineffective, the Monroe County Probation Department explores legal avenues to enforce attendance regulations for underage students. This collaborative work has been highly effective, resulting in minors surpassing adult students in attendance by more than 15%.

While attendance challenges persist not only within The Excel Center but also across the state, there is a silver lining in the form of success in other vital areas such as college and career and graduation rates. Focusing on these critical achievements has provided much-needed encouragement. It highlights that when students maintain consistent attendance, Excel Center staff is able to provide them with the opportunity to realize their full potential. This is exemplified by their impressive 96% average college and career readiness rate across 4 years. If assessed using the previous Adult "A-F" Accountability model, the Excel Center Bloomington would've been awarded an "A" school grade in the previous school year.

## Section II: Improvement

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 and has a proven track record of doing so for 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 16 locations across Indiana as well as 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 – Bloomington charter renewal application articulates GEI's plans and strategies for sustaining and continuing to build academic, organizational, and operational success over The Excel Center – Bloomington'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 16 Excel Centers operated by GEI, including The Excel Center - Bloomington. The GEI Board of Directors has operated for over eighteen years and has a demonstrated 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 – Bloomington'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 to ensure that structures and mechanisms are in place to maintain GEI's 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, 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 issues that arise. Moreover, the CAT provides a community voice to the schools.

The goal is to have the CAT 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 – Bloomington. 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 – Bloomington. The leadership team at The Excel Center – Bloomington is comprised of:

- School Director: Twyla Carlson
- Lead Coach: Hannah Anderson
- College & Career Readiness Specialist: Doreen Makamba

The school-based leadership team at The Excel Center – Bloomington is also supported by the extended leadership team of GEI, which includes the Senior Vice President, Chief Mission & Education Officer; Excel Center Regional Directors, 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. Collaborative and communicative approaches are utilized to address concerns holistically and problem solve for continuous improvement. This team is uniquely positioned to support student success and school outcomes.

#### **c. Teaching staff**

Teachers receive support from GEI's Lead Teacher Liaison and Regional Director, both of whom can work with schools on specific initiatives and areas a school may wish to target for development. Teachers are an integral part of curriculum development and revision each year as Department of Education academic standards are updated and student demographics

change. This curriculum initiative for continuous improvement leads to assurance of consistent alignment, appropriate revisions, improved practices and professional training. Additionally, Teachers participate in The Excel Center network-wide Teacher meetings. At these meetings, 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

#### **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 striving to balance their education with life commitments, 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 report "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.<sup>12</sup> 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.* Excel Center 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 8 weeks each.
- *Simplify the registration process.* Students enroll in one coherent program during student orientation and receive substantial help from life coaches, teachers, and other staff to understand their path to earn a high school diploma along with an industry-recognized credential and/or college credits.
- *Form peer support and learning networks.* Students build relationships with other

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<sup>12</sup> 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 <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED536827.pdf>

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 that 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 courses 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 toward 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 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace. The Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning developed a framework that identified many of the critical competencies and skills essential to students preparing to enter the workforce in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>13</sup> 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
- (4) Information, media, and technology skills.

Building upon the Indiana Academic Standards, The Excel Center emphasizes these skills so that students are prepared for the modern workforce. Students 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 their careers.

Many individuals who have dropped out of school will re-enter the educational system when they find 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 enable students to access greater career opportunities. Intrinsic to The Excel Center school model is the graduation requirement of students participating in at least three dual credits or an 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 credential for greater career opportunities.

The Excel Center's academic environment is designed to prepare students for post-secondary success, 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

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<sup>13</sup> Partnership for 21st Century Learning. Framework for 21st Century Learning. Retrieved from <http://www.battelleforkids.org/networks/p21/frameworks-resources>

student may take to enter a career in a given field. The Excel Center spends significant time introducing students to industries and fields where there are good prospects of finding stable employment in an industry with growth potential. The school provides 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 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 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 coaches create with each student is a critical factor in student success, as that relationship provides security, confidence, and encouragement for students to persevere 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.

## **e. Continuous Improvement**

### **1) Barrier Removal**

The Excel Center school model is innovative in that it is a first-of-its-kind adult high school that 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.

The curricular foundation of The Excel Center is based on significant evidence that its model meets the educational needs of adults. The foundation of The Excel Center's curricular approach is found in: *Developing Critical Thinkers: Challenging Adults to Explore Alternative Ways of Thinking and Acting*,<sup>14</sup> *Mentoring Adult Learners: A guide for Educators and Trainers*,<sup>15</sup> and *Mentor: Guiding the Journey of Adult Learners*.<sup>16</sup>

A significant number of adults who have dropped out of school nevertheless show a strong desire to continue their education. However, many students struggle to complete their education as skill deficits and life challenges often impede progress. The Excel Center works closely with students and community partners to remove barriers to students' academic success. Below are a number of barriers adult students face – which may impact their success in earning a high school diploma – as well as an overview of the ways The Excel Center works to address and overcome those barriers.

#### *Barrier 1: Low credit attainment and academic skill gaps*

Students arrive at The Excel Center at a variety of academic levels; students have different levels of credit attainment and they arrive at different skill levels. In some cases, students

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<sup>14</sup> Brookfield, S. (1987). *Developing critical thinkers: Challenging adults to explore alternative ways to thinking and acting*. San Francisco.

<sup>15</sup> Jossey-Bass., Cohen, N. (1995). *Mentoring adult learners: A guide for educators and trainers*. Malabar, FL.

<sup>16</sup> Krieger, and Daloz, L. (1999). *Mentor, Guiding the journey of adult learners*. San Francisco.

may have a transcript that shows they earned certain course credits, but when assessed their scores may indicate that they do not have mastery over the material.

*Solution: Meet students where they are.*

The Excel Center works with students in each of these profiles, designing an educational program that meets adult students' needs. To ensure the school is fulfilling its top two priorities – providing students with an opportunity to earn a regular high school diploma and preparing them for “what comes next”– The Excel Center dedicates considerable resources to helping students be prepared and successful. The Excel Center has dedicated remedial efforts for students who are not ready for high school-level coursework and evaluates student progress through regular assessments.

*Barrier 2: Traditional school hours interfering with the real demands of adult life*

Adults must often prioritize child care needs, family situations, or the need to work over being in a classroom during traditional school hours. The real demands of life may be the reason that some students dropped out of school in the first place and are often barriers to students re-entering school to earn a high school diploma.

*Solution: A school schedule that meets the needs of adults.*

The Excel Center operates on a balanced school calendar, with five eight-week terms in each academic year. Credits can be earned each term and students and teachers work diligently to condense a semester's worth of material into each term. This schedule allows students to earn credits quickly and make rapid progress towards their diploma. The Excel Center's curriculum integrates material across disciplines so that one course combines academic standards across multiple subjects, allowing students to earn credit in multiple areas while attending one class. The school is open to students in the morning, afternoon, and/or evening, based on student need and demand.

*Barrier 3: Balancing work and family life*

Some Excel Center students are balancing caring for their young children while also trying to continue their education. Many parents put off returning to school because they lack the ability or financial resources to pay for quality childcare.

*Solution: Free and reliable child care for students.*

To help students continue their education, The Excel Center operates a child drop-in center. This center allows for children of Excel Center students to be cared for while their parents are in class. The primary focus of the drop-in center is to give parenting students the opportunity to focus on their education knowing that their children are in a safe and secure environment. The drop-in center is a free childcare option for children of parents who are attending The Excel Center.

*Barrier 4: Lack of focus*

Students entering The Excel Center may have multiple challenges in their life they are working to balance while also prioritizing their education. These external factors can create a lack of focus as the student is re-engaging in their education.

*Solution: Addressing challenges outside of the classroom.*

Life Coaching in The Excel Center model addresses the life barriers and issues that prevent students from being successful. Coaches are responsible for keeping students engaged in school and motivated to be successful. The relationships that coaches create with each student are a critical factor in student success; those relationships provide security,



confidence, and encouragement for students to continue when the work becomes difficult and life barriers become challenging to manage. Coaches work with students to identify potential barriers to students' continued education, whether short-term barriers, long-term challenges. An example is providing free transportation assistance to Excel Center students. The Excel Center provides passes for public transportation to students. The school may also provide gas cards to allow students to drive their own vehicles to school if transportation becomes a barrier for a student.

*Barrier 5: Identifying a career path and setting goals*

For most of The Excel Center's students, earning a high school diploma is the primary reason to return to school, but few students have thought about which career to enter after graduating.

*Solution: Preparing students for "what comes next."*

The Excel Center spends a significant amount of time introducing students to high growth, high demand fields where there are good prospects of finding stable employment and a career. The Excel Center's goal is to prepare individuals for self-sufficiency. A high school diploma is an essential start, but a credential beyond a high school diploma is essential for ensuring long-term employability in the modern job market.

## **2) Classroom and School-Level Improvement**

The Excel Center's commitment to continuous improvement has been crucial to its network-level success since the first Excel Center opened in 2010. GEI and The Excel Center continue to seek ways to improve the educational programming and services provided to students as well as the network of support that assists in meeting the academic and non-academic needs of students. This includes increasing its operational efficiency and efficacy, and unwavering commitment to the overall impact on the lives of the students and communities served.

This section focuses on areas GEI has identified to drive continuous improvement. Although these identified areas are discussed at a network level across all GEI-operated Excel Centers, the impact of network-level improvements are intended to positively impact each school and contribute to the improved academic and operational performance at the individual school level.

The Excel Center school model incorporates data-driven decision making to ensure schools are maximizing the impact on each student, each classroom, and each community that they serve. There are varying levels of data analysis being conducted in all Excel Centers, including a weekly data dashboard, monthly meetings, performance discussion reviews and post-graduate data reviews.

### Weekly Data Dashboard

The Excel Center Data Dashboard provides a summary of total enrollment, students passing courses, student attendance, projected graduate performance, and special population performance. On a weekly cadence, staff focuses on leading and lagging measures. All staff members are responsible for utilizing and analyzing this data to address needs specific to their position responsibilities. Data aggregation and analysis is performed by school staff and used to identify which students are in danger of not passing classes, assisting teachers and support staff in reallocating resources to ensure students have the support needed to best achieve their academic goals.

Once data is disaggregated schools are heavily concentrated on improving outcomes and determining appropriate interventions to address the goals and needs of the students, school and network. An effective review with all stakeholders include three key priorities: school-specific/network-wide data comparison, classroom/area specific data comparison, and student specific data. Key indicators for each of these sections are outlined below.

- School-Specific/Network-Wide Data:
  - Student productivity (percentage of students currently passing one or more classes)
  - Student attendance
  - Student enrollment
  - Number of projected graduate
  - Special population performance
- Classroom/Area Specific Data:
  - Mastery average (Percent of students achieving at an 70% level or above)
  - Attendance average for each course offered
  - Productivity percentage (Percent of students currently passing with a 60% or above)
- Student-Specific Data:
  - Productivity percentage (Percent of students currently passing with a 60% or above)
  - Mastery concerns (students below 80%)
  - Productivity concerns (students not passing all of their scheduled courses)
  - Student daily attendance trends
  - Outside barriers to student success (homelessness, transportation, mental health needs, etc.)
  - Progress for potential graduates in all of their remaining requirements

### Monthly Meetings

Each monthly meeting demonstrates the value of network-wide sharing and a collective approach to analyze, problem-solve, and innovate, allowing leaders across 16 locations to leverage the expertise of their peers and Regional Directors on a monthly basis. Key metrics, performance outcomes, challenges and opportunities are regularly discussed. During this time, leaders have the ability to answer questions related to school performance across the entire Excel Center network, compare outcomes across locations, take a deep analysis into why certain schools are performing better than others or suggest ways to improve performance across multiple charters. The consistency of this practice affords leaders the opportunity to receive insight on where high-performing best practices may be found, as well as, maintain their momentum for continuous improvement. The primary objectives for monthly meetings regarding data sharing are as follow:

- Equipping school leadership teams to use and analyze data to improve all other building-level procedures;
- Identifying and sharing best practices across The Excel Center network;
- Creating opportunities for collaboration and mentoring across The Excel Center network by identifying each school's areas of strengths, as well as their areas for growth;
- Maintaining live, accurate data to help with progress monitoring on key metrics of

- school success and school- and network-level goals; and
- Identifying internal and external supports needed to ensure school success.

### Performance Discussion Reviews

The Excel Center school model incorporates data-driven decision making to ensure schools are maximizing the impact on each student, classroom, and community they serve. During five evaluation performance discussions, school directors explain their performance from the previous terms on several indicators. They explain the factors that led to their current level of performance and the steps they will take to address lagging indicators in order to improve the school's performance. These meetings are held with Regional Directors in order to (1) hold School Directors accountable for their results (2) provide intentional intervention support and (3) determine opportunities to share effective solutions across locations to have a greater impact on the network. Leaders assess whether their location requires additional resources, training or intensive assistance to improve their performance. In each evaluation period, School Directors review the performance from the prior term and discuss whether the changes made have led to measurable improvement. Key indicators analyzed include:

- Student performance (credits earned, attendance, productivity and more)
- Student enrollment and retention outcomes
- Number of projected graduates
- Certification and dual credit offerings and completion
- School accountability projections (metrics established by DOE)

Data analysis in the performance discussion reviews are generally similar to the data reviewed during the weekly data dashboard; however, almost all of the data is used to assess the overall trajectory of the school success, leverage support from Regional directors and identify opportunities to improve student and staff outcomes.

### Post-Graduate Reviews

Helping students realize their potential through diploma attainment and post-secondary achievements are key components of the Excel Center model. With the intentional delivery of wrap-around services the school strives to remove barriers that impede on self-sufficiency outcomes after graduation. Frequent surveys are delivered to generate feedback on supports needed and outcomes achieved by graduates. Data from 30 days to 24 months post-graduation is analyzed and reviewed in a collaborative session amongst leaders across all 16 locations. The purpose of the review is to (1) bring awareness to staff regarding outcomes (2) create alignment with course offerings and accomplishments (3) take collective action, as well as, (4) improve the delivery of services. Post-graduate reviews include metrics such as:

- College enrollment and potential enrollment
- Employment status and placement
- Wages and earnings
- Barriers
- Childcare needs and utilization
- Financial Health

### **3) Network-Level Improvement**

The Excel Center has experienced considerable growth since its inception, growing from one school in 2010 to 16 schools operated by GEI in 2023 and a total of 40 schools across the country. Rapid expansion of The Excel Center network has led to rapid change within each of The Excel Centers. Performance evaluation, leadership development and collaboration have been identified as priority areas to assist with the continuous improvement of The Excel Center network as a whole.

#### **Performance Evaluation**

Oftentimes, the best teachers and school staff are promoted to become school directors or take on other leadership roles. Although growth and expansion lead to desirable career growth and leadership opportunities for staff, promotion of talented staff often leads to gaps in school staffing and a diminishing bench of talent fills those positions. The Excel Center for Adult Learners has experienced such turnover as former school leaders have accepted promotions within the network.

The growth of The Excel Center network has led to The Excel Center spending considerable time investing in the growth of its staff. The Excel Center seeks to develop a pipeline of qualified individuals to direct the operations of current and future schools. The most rudimentary way that The Excel Center supports the growth and continued development of staff is through performance evaluation. GEI leadership has identified 7 core elements on which Excel Center staff are evaluated five times per school year (at least once per term):

- Accountability Performance
- Student Performance
- Financial Performance
- Compliance Performance
- Enrollment Performance
- Talent Performance
- Postsecondary Success

School directors are evaluated on all core elements while all other staff positions are evaluated based on the core elements that are relevant to their position and job functions. Each element is broken down into domains, competencies, and indicators. The evaluations that each staff member undergoes is called the Performance Development Review. As the name alludes, the purpose of evaluation is to help each staff member hone their practice and continue to grow. The frequency of the Performance Development Reviews allows staff to authentically measure their progress, just as student progress is tracked and measured, and further ensures that issues can be remediated promptly and successes can be celebrated immediately. In the fast-paced environment of The Excel Center, it is equally important to regularly celebrate staff success in addition to regularly celebrating student success. By deliberately addressing areas for improvement and similarly celebrating successes, the overall environment of The Excel Center embodies a positive school culture in which continuous improvement is embraced.

### Leadership Development

Professional growth opportunities and access to peers across the GEI and national Excel Center network help to foster a talent pipeline and prepare staff to seamlessly step into school leadership roles. Leadership development is offered at a variety of levels. As described in the “Sustaining Success” section of this charter renewal application, GEI has developed specialized teacher and coach training to further develop and elevate the capacity of these roles as they are directly interacting and working with students every day.

GEI has also developed a leadership training series for emerging school directors, along with all lead staff. Each school director is charged with identifying staff who are interested in or may benefit from the training based on their skills, abilities, and professional growth goals. The intended outcomes for these leadership series are three-fold:

(1) raise awareness and competency in general job functions of each position; (2) continue to develop and build a pipeline of talent to lead schools, including developing a succession plan in the event of staff turnover; and (3) contribute to the continuous improvement of each school and The Excel Center network as a whole. At an individual level, the goal is for each series participant to develop his or her personal leadership style and strengths. In each series, participants explore topics such as leadership styles, crucial conversations, identifying and building professional development opportunities, and evaluating staff.

Each series includes 4 to 5 day-long sessions. During sessions, participants learn about essential job duties and skills, work on assignments designed to synthesize the skills that they have learned while authentically engaging with core job duties, and have opportunities for self-reflection and discussion. Each series requires participants to complete a capstone assignment that encourages the participant to develop their leadership style, develop an action plan, and implement their vision of leadership through solving real, day-to-day problems. The capstone assignment is ultimately an opportunity for professional growth that contributes to the overall success and improvement of the network.

### Collaboration

A major benefit of being part of a large school network is the ample opportunity to collaborate and the vast number of people with whom to collaborate. The extensive experiences, knowledge, skills, and expertise of staff across The Excel Center network contributes to its ability to remain innovative and in a state of continuous improvement. As described in the “Classroom and School-Level Continuous Improvement” section of this charter renewal application, school leadership teams meet on a routine basis to discuss leading and lagging indicators of school performance as well as collaborate and communicate frequently for collective problem solving as issues arise.

In addition to the routine collaboration among leaders within a school, staff across the network collaborate through positional meetings. During these positional meetings (held by group for Directors, Lead Teachers, Lead Coaches, College and Career Specialists, Special Education ToRs, English Language ToRs, Young Learner’s Child Care Managers, and Office Managers), updates are provided by those designated to lead the meetings and then teams share success stories and best practices and work together to

solve problems and issues that they are seeing in their respective buildings and communities.

Furthermore, GCSI holds an annual conference embedded with professional development strands to appeal to all positions within The Excel Center. All staff members interested in presenting at the conference must submit a proposal to GEI leadership in the weeks leading up to the conference. Session strands typically include:

- Life Coaching best practices, highlighting proactive identification of potential barriers to student success and identifying how to best utilize community partners to provide wrap-around support for students at The Excel Center;
- Instructional strategies to best engage adult learners, with specific focus on teacher evaluation tools and staff development;
- Strategies to keep staff and students engaged by promoting self-growth and awareness, ultimately establishing and improving a positive school culture; and
- Brainstorming sessions created to provide a voice to all staff members and their ideas.

As The Excel Center network has continued to grow and expand, the importance of collaboration has continued to increase while convening staff across the network has become increasingly difficult due to time constraints and distance. Face-to-face meetings, although important, remove school leaders from their buildings and lessen student access to school staff. Recognizing the importance of maintaining staff and student relationships and keeping school leaders in their buildings, The Excel Center has become increasingly more adept at utilizing technology to meet and collaborate with colleagues. Although Excel Center staff and leadership meet in person whenever necessary, providing technology solutions such as Google Hangouts and Zoom as well as informal solutions such as GroupMe, has further developed a culture of collaboration throughout The Excel Center and further enabled staff to understand and implement best practices and make needed shifts or changes quickly.

This ability to be flexible with in-person and virtual meetings has allowed GEI and The Excel Center to continue these opportunities, even in light of COVID-19 and its impact on the last three school years.

#### **4) Certification Offerings**

The Excel Center offers elective courses that meet the educational needs of students. These electives provide students the opportunity to explore the viability of a career in a high-growth, in-demand sector of the local economy. In order to determine the electives and certifications needed in a local community, GEI solicits input from local employers and community partners to ensure our offerings align with talent demands. All of the certifications offered to students at The Excel Center are included on Indiana's Department of Workforce Development List of Promoted Industry Certifications.<sup>17</sup> GEI understands that all of the certifications included on Indiana's List of Promoted Industry Certifications have been thoroughly vetted by state officials and their designees and are most likely to lead students to quality employment as they are recognized as both valued and needed in Indiana's economy.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.in.gov/dwd/2852.htm>

In an effort to provide students with as many tangible career pathways as possible that will lead to high growth career opportunities offering a family sustaining wage, GEI and The Excel Center leadership continuously seek new and relevant certification offerings that may be offered to students. To assist in this process, GEI established a five-phase approach (described below) to review industry certification offerings on a regular basis. Leadership seeks to identify new certifications that should be made available to students based on stated need from community partners, interest by students, or awareness of certification offerings by new or existing postsecondary partners.

Once potential certifications have been identified, the following steps are initiated.

- **Phase 1: *Feasibility and Discovery***  
Research the certification, including the time needed to complete the certification, the costs associated with classes, materials/supplies, testing, etc., the employment opportunities available to individuals with the certification, any other qualifications for employment for typical jobs requiring the certification, and anticipated wages and growth opportunities for typical jobs requiring the certification.
- **Phase 2: *Community Development and Problem Solving***  
Work with members of the community to overcome any challenges to offering the certification that were identified in Phase 1.
- **Phase 3: *Planning***  
Plan for offering the newly identified certification, including executing Memoranda of Understanding and data sharing agreements with certification providers, develop plans for exposing students to the certification offering and for identifying students for certification courses, and develop curriculum (i.e., align coursework to credits, design course plan and syllabus, identify work-based learning opportunities, develop assessment calendar, etc.).
- **Phase 4: *Implementation***  
Implement the certification offering at one school, a sampling of school locations, or all schools (depending on the certification and plan developed in Phase 3).
- **Phase 5: *Evaluation and Rollout***  
Evaluate student, school, and related outcomes resulting from the certification. Evaluation considerations include: actual cost of offering the certification; wages earned by students/graduates earning the certification; job market analysis; pass rates; relationship with employer partners requiring job candidates to have the certification; and scalability of certification. If the outcomes of offering the certification are positive, then The Excel Center will continue to offer the certification and rollout to the entire network, as appropriate.

In the event it is determined that a certification should be offered that is not on the state's approved certification list, GEI will submit an application to the state requesting to add the certification to the list. Likewise, GEI and Excel Center leadership review industry certification offerings at least annually (more often, if warranted) to identify which certifications should no longer be offered due to the impracticality of offering such certification at The Excel Center (e.g., cost, number of hours needed to complete the certification, little to no upward mobility).

## **Section III: Proposed Changes to Charter Agreement**

None



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## **The Excel Center – Bloomington Budget Narrative**

### **State Funding:**

Fixed assumptions by ICSB have held funding at the current rate throughout the projection. The Excel Center – Bloomington does not receive state SPED, but we would expect to see some increase in per student funding during the projection period to offset the removal of SPED.

### **Federal Funding:**

Federal funding includes funding through the Part B Federal Special Education grants. Funding within the five-year budget is projected to increase at least 1% each year. The Excel Center – Bloomington will also receive some Title II funding during the projection period but no increase was factored in.

### **Other Revenue:**

Budgeted Other Revenue represents the expected E-Rate Reimbursement for the internet.

### **Inflation:**

While certain expenses are likely to increase annually due to inflation. The budget model uses fairly flat expenses (increases of .5-2%) through the 5-year period except for salary and wage costs 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.

### **Instructional Supplies and Resources:**

Prior year actual and current year budgets were used to develop the 5-year projection, assuming a .5-2% increase in most areas. Expenses, such as internet, were budgeted at full cost rather than the discounted e-rate expense, and the expected reimbursement was recorded in Other Income.

### **Support Supplies:**

As described in the line, this includes operating supplies, dues, and graduation expenses. We also used prior year actual and the current year budget to calculate these amounts, assuming a .5-2% increase in most lines.

### **Professional or Contracted Services:**

The annual financial audit as well as insurance and contracted security were all projected with slight increases over the 5-year term. All other elements were increased by 1-2%.

### **Facilities Expense:**

The rental rate to our landlord is expected to remain flat over this projection as the increase occurred in Year 5.

Depreciation remains steady through this projection assuming continued investment and care of the space. Should this work be done by the Landlord, that depreciation expense may be lower.

**Other Expenses:**

Management fees to Goodwill Education Initiatives (GEI) have been reduced in this projection to reflect the support provided by GEI given this funding scenario.

**Other Financial Considerations, Depending on Potential State Funding Changes:**

If the Indiana General Assembly should make changes to state funding, GEI has several layers of support for the Bloomington Excel Center that will be enacted as needed once future funding is known. These supports include, use of GEI reserves, applying for grants from the Goodwill Foundation (part of our parent Goodwill organization – Goodwill of Central and Southern Indiana), and the sharing of some specialized staff positions between two or more of our Excel Centers.

Exhibit C

**Statement of Assurances**

The charter school agrees to comply with 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 Indiana Code ("IC") § 20-24.
- ☒ 3. Recipients will, for the life of the charter, participate in all data reporting and evaluation activities as required by the Indiana Charter School Board ("ICSB") and the Indiana Department of Education. 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 receiving federal Charter School Program Grant funds 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*, 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 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 the 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 the ICSB may revoke the charter if the ICSB deems that the recipient is not fulfilling the academic goals, fiscal management, or legal and operational responsibilities outlined in the charter.

**Signature from Authorized Representative of the Charter School Applicant**

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.

Gita Baker

Name



Signature

President, GEI Board

Title

8/11/2023

Date



# A second chance: Adult learners complete high school diplomas and increase their options



Photo: Goodwill of Central & Southern Indiana

## Key Results

- The Excel Center® is a successful, cost-effective solution for high school dropouts.
- After 4 years, graduates increase earnings by 35% compared to their peers.
- Graduates are more likely to be working and enrolled in college than their peers.
- All graduates - regardless of race, gender or demographics - experience similar earnings outcomes.

### Context of the Issue

There is a high school dropout problem in Indiana. In 2019, more than 12% of students did not finish high school. Those who drop out have significantly worse labor market outcomes than peers. Hoosiers without a high school diploma earn, on average, less than \$10,000 per year and 37% less than those with a high school diploma as their highest credential. Adult learners have unique needs that are not one-size-fits-all, often balancing otherwise busy lives with full-time work while managing a household and caring for children. Hoosiers driven to finish high school as adults often have to choose between convenience and potential earnings. There is a solution that meets adult learners where they are, leads to higher earnings and has the evidence to prove it: The Excel Center.

### Current Efforts

In 2019, almost 470,000 Hoosiers ages 25 and over had not earned a high school diploma (or equivalent). When one of these adults wants to return to school, they are typically directed to the High School Equivalency (HSE) test.<sup>1</sup> However, completion of an HSE is not common - in 2015, just over 6,600 Hoosiers successfully passed. Their earnings gains are minimal: students who barely pass the General Educational Development test (another high school equivalency test) see less than a 10% increase in earnings. A high school diploma will potentially trump an HSE when an employer compares two similar job applicants. A high school diploma offers something significantly different than the HSE test. In the process of completing the diploma, the student builds soft skills in such areas as attendance, persistence and interpersonal interaction. Where available,

the high school diploma can support learning for those whose educational needs cannot be met by traditional Adult Basic Education and the HSE test. Importantly, the HSE can indeed be just a test studied for and taken, while the Excel Center experience is as much about process as about completing the diploma. Despite this range of benefits, options for adults to complete a high school diploma are extremely limited.

### Innovative Solution: The Excel Center

Founded by Goodwill of Central and Southern Indiana, The Excel Center is a tuition-free, public charter high school that supports adult learners in completing their state-certified high school diploma. The Excel Center provides small classes on a flexible schedule, assistance with transportation, and on-site child care in order to address the major barriers to being in class and ready to learn. Life coaches mentor students to help them navigate challenges, to assist in building soft skills necessary for the workforce, and to focus on postsecondary goals and preparedness such as credits towards an undergraduate degree or industry-recognized certifications. Goodwill of Central and Southern Indiana operate 15 Excel Center locations across Indianapolis and other parts of central and southern Indiana; there are three additional locations in northern Indiana. The collective Excel Center network includes 31 schools across five states and Washington, D.C. - all operated by local Goodwills - with a goal of serving 30 total states by 2030.

<sup>1</sup> Indiana changed from administering the General Educational Development (GED) test to the High School Equivalency (HSE) test in 2014.



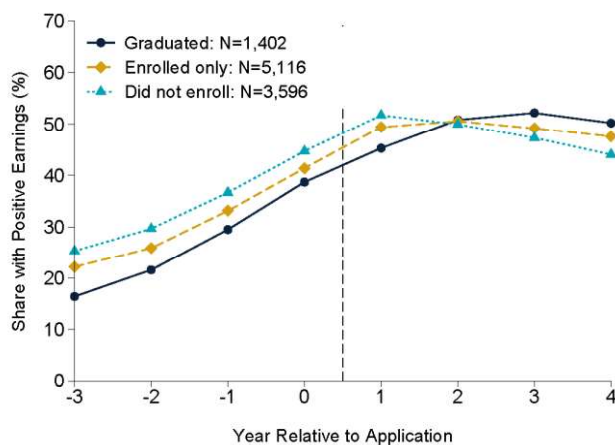
## LEO's Study

LEO performed a rigorous, quasi-experimental study to evaluate the impact of The Excel Center's specialized approach. The study sample included all applicants to The Excel Center from January 2013 through September 2015. Three groups of applicants were studied: (a) those who applied to the program but did not enroll; (b) those who applied and enrolled but did not complete the program; and (c) those who both enrolled in and completed the program – with individuals in group (a) and (b) serving as a comparison group of “peers” to group (c). LEO researchers linked application records from the Excel Center with education and labor market data from the Indiana Management Performance Hub. LEO used earnings and employment data from five years after a student's application to The Excel Center in order to analyze changes in earnings over time.

## Major Findings

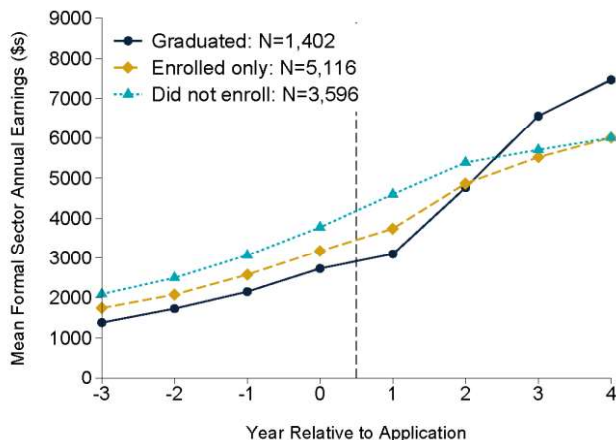
Higher employment: Excel Center graduates are 22 percentage points more likely to be employed in the formal sector than their peers (69% versus 47%).

Figure 1. Percent of Applicants with Formal Sector Employment



Higher earnings: Excel Center graduates see a 35% increase in their earnings in 4 years (\$9,644 annual income for graduates versus \$7,104 for peers).

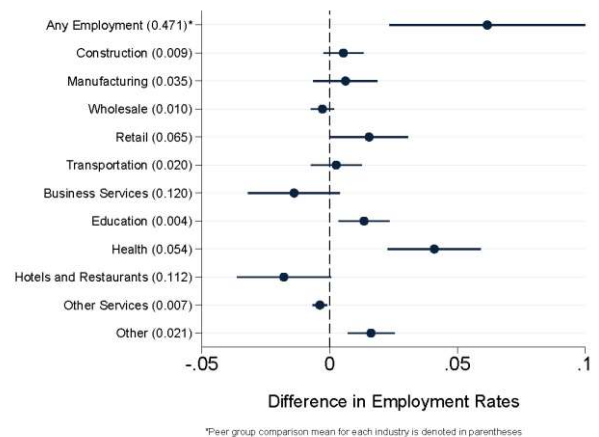
Figure 2. Average Annual Earnings



More college enrollment: Excel Center graduates are 20 percentage points more likely to be enrolled in college or professional certificate programs (22% versus 2%).

More career opportunities: Excel Center graduates are 4 percentage points more likely to be employed in the health sector than their peers (9% versus 5%).

Figure 3. Probability of Employment in Different Sectors



No differences across groups: Excel Center graduates see similar increases in earnings regardless of gender, race, socioeconomic background, or geography.

## Lasting State Benefit

At a cost of \$6,750 per student per year, the total cost for an Excel Center graduate is \$10,000. An Excel Center graduate is projected to make higher earnings over their lifetime, increasing the benefit to the individual and potentially to society through decreased use of public benefits and increased tax payments.

## Key Takeaways

- Graduates of The Excel Center make more money, work in higher opportunity jobs, and are enrolled in college more than their peers.
- The Excel Center costs the same as other charter schools, and has more advantages for adult dropouts than the common HSE alternative.
- The Excel Center is a proven model to help people who drop out of high school course-correct.



October 16, 2023

I am writing to express my wholehearted support for the Excel Center and the valuable services it provides to our community. As a member of Ivy Tech Community College Bloomington, I am deeply aware of the transformative impact that educational institutions like the Excel Center can have on individuals' lives.

Ivy Tech and the Excel Center share a common commitment to empowering individuals through education. The Excel Center's dedication to providing accessible, high-quality education to adults seeking to complete their high school education is commendable. The center's innovative approach and supportive learning environment create opportunities for adult learners to gain essential skills, further their education, and improve their employment prospects.

The center's programs not only equip individuals with academic knowledge but also instill confidence and motivation, enabling them to pursue higher education and better career opportunities. By offering tailored support services and a flexible learning environment, the Excel Center ensures that learners of all backgrounds can succeed academically. We have had many Excel graduates accepted to the Accelerated Programs on our campus.

I am confident that the Excel Center will continue to inspire and empower learners, creating a positive ripple effect throughout our community. If there is any way I can further assist or contribute to the center's initiatives, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Warm regards,

Jennifer Rusk,  
Director of Recruitment, Admissions and Accelerated Programs  
Ivy Tech Community College of Bloomington  
Jrusk5@ivytech.edu

200 DANIELS WAY  
BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA 47404-9772  
812-332-1559  
FAX 812-330-6212



IVY TECH  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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October 10, 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

The Excel Center in Bloomington is a valuable partner organization with Ivy Tech Community College in Bloomington. Together, we provide educational opportunities to their students by offering college courses at no cost. This reduces overall college debt load. Accessing college courses prepares their students to become more capable of success in a collegiate environment. In collaboration, the opportunities created by this partnership empower students to explore postsecondary and career options. We look forward to the continued mutually beneficial relationship between our institutions into the future.

Kind regards,

Joe Hughbanks  
Director of K-14 Initiatives  
Ivy Tech Community College - Bloomington

200 DANIELS WAY  
BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA 47404-9772  
812-332-1559  
FAX 812-330-6212



KLR Medical Certification Training School  
Learning. Training. Growing. Empowering.  
[www.klronlinecertifications.com](http://www.klronlinecertifications.com)

October 10, 2023

On behalf of KLR Medical Certification Training School, I write today to express our unwavering support for the funding increase requested by The Excel Center adult high schools in the 2023-2024 state budget. The Excel Centers and their students have been incredible partners and assets to our business and community, and we respectfully request that you support their funding request.

As we all know, securing a reliable workforce pipeline in the State of Indiana has been a challenge, and cultivating a workforce of educated individuals who hold a high school diploma, workforce certifications, dual credits, and beyond is crucial to ensure the continued success of KLR Medical Certification Training School. While there are many educational paths that potential employees and members of the workforce may take, individuals who have obtained a high school diploma, and specifically graduates of The Excel Center, are the individuals we seek to hire. Ensuring that The Excel Centers can continue to serve more individuals in our community is a crucial element in growing Indiana's workforce and filling critical jobs.

The Excel Center holds a special place in my heart, as I am a 2014 Excel Center graduate. I grew up with parents who were drug addicts and alcoholics, and with little to no support at home, I found myself pregnant with my first child at the age of 13. My father unenrolled me from school with promises that I would be homeschooled, promises he never saw through. Fast forward several years, after spending years working dead-end jobs and struggling to make ends meet, I found The Excel Center, and I was enrolled the next day. I earned 42 credits and 2 certifications, including the Pharmacy Technician Certification. Directly after graduation, I utilized that certification to work my way up the ladder in both retail and hospital pharmacy, eventually leading me into education. Ten years later, I am the CEO and Founder of KLR Medical Certification Training School, which is a team of 8 instructors offering multiple different courses

to individuals in 27 different states. The Excel Center changed my life and the lives of my children.

In conclusion, as you make your final funding determinations for the 2023-2024 state budget, please consider Indiana's workforce needs and the need of businesses in our state to employ individuals with a high school diploma. The ability to hire individuals who hold a full high school diploma is critical to our business and community, and for that reason, the funding request made by The Excel Centers has our full support.

Sincerely,

Katie Reigelsperger, CPhT, CBCS, CCMA, In-D  
KLR Medical Certification Training School, LLC  
CEO & Founder  
765-610-6451



**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
**C COMPANY RECRUITING AND RETENTION BATTALION**  
**3380 S WALNUT ST**  
**BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA 47401**

NGIN-RRZ

11 October 2023

**MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD**

**SUBJECT: Impact letter for Excel center**

1. The Excel Center of Bloomington has played a huge part on bettering individuals lives. Their ability to give people a second chance to succeed in life have been detrimental on this community. People that I have spoken to that attend the Excel center have been grateful for their work.
2. I currently work as a Indiana National Guard recruiter for the Bloomington area. We strive to enlist the best people that could benefit the community and the nation. The Excel Center has provided me the opportunity to inform their students of the possibilities to continue their education beyond a high school diploma. Individuals that would not be able to serve are given the ability to join thanks to the Excel Center.
3. POC for this memorandum is SFC Eric Ballou. I can be reached by email at [eric.p.ballou.mil@army.mil](mailto:eric.p.ballou.mil@army.mil) or cell phone 812-320-1526.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. P. Ballou", is located below the list of points.

Eric P. Ballou  
SFC, USA  
Recruiting and Retention NCO



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**10/10/2023**

Next Level Academies

2728 Dr, Andrew J Brown Avenue

Indianapolis, IN 46205

**To Whom it May Concern,**

This letter acknowledges that Next Level Academies is a community partner and provider. The Excel Center, through our Next Level Academies organization, has created opportunities that have empowered and enhanced students' independence through education, career opportunities through certifications, work-based learning, and employment opportunities. Next Level Academies has been certifying The Excel Center Students since 2019. We laid the foundation by empowering Excel Center students in the Core Curriculum. Since then, we have added Level 1 in HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical and Carpentry. Next Level Academies have graduated many Excel Center students in the Core and the Level 1 Curriculum. Completing any National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) curriculum results in an industry-recognized credential through NCCER. Also, completing an NCCER Curriculum assists in developing entry-level skills and construction competency that can support the attainment of work in the construction industry. We are delighted to be a part of changing lives in the community with the Excel Center.

Respectfully,

Antonio Lipscomb

President

Next Level Academies



October 12, 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

As the Director of the Career Resource Center, I am thankful to each partner who supports the mission of adult learning in this community. The Career Resource Center is an "Educational Hub" for all those who seek to improve their quality of life through education. Partnerships such as the one with The Excel Center, Bloomington provides training and employment support. The CRC and The Excel Center, Bloomington are proud to share in the development of each client's individual learning plan and goals. Together, we provide opportunities and programming that has empowered and enhanced student's independence through postsecondary education and Healthcare career exploration opportunities thus increasing potential financial earnings. We support the ongoing mission of The Excel Center, Bloomington and hope to remain in this partnership for many years to come.

Thank you,

Christy Wrightsman  
Director, Career Resource Center of Brown County





*South Central Community Action Program  
Thriving Connections  
1500 W. 15th St.  
Bloomington, IN 47404  
812-339-3447*

10.10.23

To Whom It May Concern:

South Central Community Action Program, Inc. has been helping Monroe County citizens fight poverty for more than 50 years through numerous programs and services, including Head Start/Early Head Start, Energy Assistance Program, Weatherization, Housing Choice Opportunities, and Thriving Connections (TC). TC is a family development initiative that focuses on building social resources for people working their way out of poverty. It is an intentional way for participants and volunteers to build relationships across class and race lines to end poverty in their communities. Under-resourced participants in the community create goals, policies, and approaches to end poverty and empower people in poverty to help solve community problems while transitioning out of poverty themselves. Weekly meetings build community and provide programming and information on issues that affect participants. Volunteers with stable resources are matched with participants to provide emotional support, problem-solving help, assistance with skill sets, connections with the middle-class community, and friendship.

One of the projects that our community has been working on since 2015 is Sustainable Employment. Our participants found that traditional job training and resume workshops, while helpful, weren't addressing topics and issues that were relevant and important to them. TC's Sustainable Employment coaching and trainings are informed and developed by its participants, and address issues like how to tell if a workplace is a good fit for them, navigating the benefits cliff effect, self-advocacy, and living wage. Until recently, the coaching and workshops were only available to TC participants.

In 2022, TC received a grant from the Smithville Foundation to be able to offer its workshop to audiences outside of its own participants. One of the first community partners to express interest and see value in the uniqueness of Sustainable Employment was the Excel Center in Bloomington. Doreen Makamba warmly welcomed us into her classroom to meet students and offer them our employment tools and resources. Her students are also always welcoming and engaged, asking great questions and sharing their wisdom with one another, which speaks to the effect that her modeling has had on those that spend time with her. I've seen Excel Center's presence in Bloomington and I commend their outreach strategies. They are in touch with the population that they serve, meeting them wherever they are, and being intentional about showing up for them at local events and resource fairs. I always look forward to seeing them, because they genuinely enjoy their work and welcome people in. These are the qualities that are needed in order to meaningfully connect with people, build relationships, and support them in finding employment that moves them toward economic well-being. We very much look forward to continuing our partnership with Excel Center in 2024 and support their request for charter renewal.

Please feel free to contact me if you need any more information.

Sincerely,

Katie Hopkins  
Thriving Connections Coordinator  
South Central Community Action Program  
1500 W. 15th St.  
Bloomington, IN 47404  
812.339.3447

Odilia Didas Msalu  
[didasodlee@gmail.com](mailto:didasodlee@gmail.com)  
8123699763

Excel Center-Bloomington  
2088 Libert Drive, suit 101  
Bloomington, IN 47403.

October 16, 2023

Dear Excel center staffs,

I'm writing this letter to express my appreciation for your hard work, for being there for me, and for helping me achieve my goal. As an international student, I did not expect to get free education here in the US, but Excel Center without looking at my nationality helped me open the door to my dream job. I would like to express my gratitude to all of you for making a difference in my life; you paved the way for me to achieve my goals. I understand that I'm not alone in needing to return to school after the ups and downs of life. I hope that you will continue to provide education to more individuals and inspire them to pursue their future careers

At the beginning, I liked to work in the healthcare field, but I did not know where to begin, but with the help of Excel center assisted me in my journey. Now I'm at Ivy Tech Community College, studying Respiratory Therapy in the Health Science department. Without your help, I would not be here. I am grateful for your help and I hope that you will continue to assist others in achieving their goals.

Yours truly,

Odilia Msalu.

The Excel Center changed me, my life, my perceptions, and my world. I walk out of our beloved Excel Center a different person. I leave as a more confident, enlightened, and grounded individual than when my journey here began. It is an honor to share a brief glimpse into that journey with you, as well as this very moment.

Some of my experiences at Excel were shared with the people we Excel Center graduates came to love and appreciate. Those people include Gianni Adams, Hannah Anderson, Doreen Makamba, Rachel and Twyla Carlson to name a few. My first memories of Excel include a class screening of “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Wolfe”, writing intimate thoughts for daily journals which I refused to share in class, and saying “Good Morning” to whomever passed me every day. However, there were private I experienced in grave solitude. My daily breakdowns on the bus, crying the entire way to school, panic attacks I had to conquer before Algebra 1A, and more stress than I believed I would be able to handle. While my private moments were terrible at times, it was the time spent my Excel Center family that drew me out of that dark place. Andra Day so beautifully phrased it, “I’ll rise unafraid”, and rising for me at that time required a helping hand. I found that each day here at Excel. Seeing friendly faces four days a week was medicinal to my heart. Having lively discussions with my peers and finding I have so much in common with those around me, forced out my false perception of isolation. Being welcomed by my instructors, peers, and advisors without fail brought a life changing feeling of community into my life. Never had I felt so valued. Suddenly, I no longer had to “rise” alone, as a result of this “rising” unafraid became more natural. On my first day of in-person classes, I had no way of knowing that the Excel Center would become a second home, a refuge, a place of peace for me. The Excel Center was just supposed to be my school, instead it has become a home to congregate with my extended family. I am very grateful for all the Excel Center Staff. My life will forever be guided by the wisdom and love I received while attending school here. I gained so much as a person during my time as a student of the Excel Center and will carry it all with me throughout my life.

Abbi Coop

10/06/2023

**To whom it may concern**

**I'm writing this letter on behalf of The Excel Center in Bloomington Indiana. I would like to take an opportunity to first of all thank The Excel Center's Staff that welcomes me and makes me feel comfortable enough in a positive way to continue my education.**

**The Excel Center not only gave me an opportunity to continue my education, but also allowed me to get a license as a Pharmacy Technician, a better job, and also gave me the confidence that I could succeed in life.**

**As a student of The Excel Center I could see the incredible benefit that not only made an effect in my life but also in others whose life was completely turned around in a very positive way. Thanks to The Excelcenter there were students who started careers including me, that contributed to the help of the community like: Nurses, Pharmacy Technicians among others.**

**My hope is that this program continues helping those who for whatever reason have fallen behind in their education and for them to make a difference in our society.**

**Sincerely**

**Clara Hogan**

I had planned on graduating in 2004 when I was 19 years old, that just wasn't the path that I took, and one thing I learned from making wrong turns on the roads I've traveled in this life, is it's never too late to turn around and go back the right direction. I first came to the Excel Center not even sure if I was going to be able to start classes. I sat through four hours of orientation before I even said a word. See, I got my GED 20 years ago, and some people are probably wondering, "why would you want to come back for a high school diploma?", but I'll tell you why. Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world." I want to be part of that change we want to see in this world. Being part of the Excel Center taught me that I CAN make a difference. Although I was only here for a year, I feel like I've known my teachers and classmates so much longer. The friendships made are sure to be friendships that will last a lifetime. I always felt like I mattered when I was at school being surrounded by some of the most amazing people I've ever met. People believed in me and pushed me to be the best me I could be. I learned that my past has a purpose, and my future has meaning.

Sincerely,

Jessica Young

Jeanette Niyitegeka  
Director of Excel Center

RE: A thank you very much note

Dear Director,

I am Jeanette Niyitegeka, an alumna of Excel Center Bloomington. It is with great pleasure that I write to Excel Center Bloomington to thank all the team that worked in synergy to help achieve the professional competence and performance that I am about today.

Excel Center helped me to study and complete high school and now I got my Diploma. It was not an easy task but, I regularly worked together with my teachers who guided my pathways until I reached required knowledge and skills and hence met the schools objectives. With my Diploma, I applied for a job and now I am able to produce services that help the betterment of the community in Bloomington. Based on Excel Center's knowledge and skills, I hope to take this opportunity to continue my studies for a Degree in Business Management.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,  
Jeanette Niyitegeka

10/3/23

In April I came to the Bloomington Excel Center to further my education. I was very nervous because it's been years since I've been in school, but when I got there they were very nice and willing to help me along the way. I have been at the Excel Center for 5 months and in those 5 months I have learned a lot of Math, English, Science I even learned how to write a full essay, and I can read in confidence. My kids can come to me for help with their math homework and I help them with no problem something I couldn't do before. When it comes to the Daycare it's a plus for me knowing that my kids are safe while I learn. So, the Excel Center in Bloomington impacted my life tremendously I just needed to take the first step and I'm happy I did.

Jungula Wallech

I started at the Excel Center Bloomington in January of 2022 and let me tell you, I was terrified. I was terrified. I started out by sitting in the very back of the class, silent as could be and never asking questions or talking if I didn't have to. I was as much of an introvert as you could imagine one to be. Fast-forward to my first week here and the beginning of my first day was filled with anxiety and fear, but by the end of the day I had left with a smile and a story for home about how good of a first day I had. As the week went on, I began to warm up to all the newness and became familiar with most parts of the school and of the people around me. I slowly started talking more in class, engaging more and even eventually moved up a couple seats. As I made it through the terms, I also built relationships with each teacher that I had.

The Excel Center staff formed part of who I am today. I went from being shy, anxious and quiet to being the person who sits up close in class, actively engages in the conversations between teachers and classmates, and someone who is so much more outspoken than I ever thought I could be. I gained confidence in myself through the multiple presentations and group discussions we had in class, I learned how to be vulnerable and real from writing multiple papers and poems on just that, and honestly I learned how to be the best version of myself that I can be and that there's nothing wrong with putting yourself out there, even if it's a little terrifying at first. The Excel Center has truly helped me form into a new version of myself that I never imagined.

Keeley Price