

**ICSB Charter Activation Request  
Phalen Leadership Academy at School 48**

**Activation Request Overview**

Phalen Leadership Academies (PLA) is a non-profit network of public schools working to raise the educational achievement of children living in low-income communities. We are honored to submit a charter activation request to the Indiana Charter School Board, which would allow us to convert PLA at Louis B Russell Jr School #48 (PLA@48) into an Innovation Charter School. On March 19<sup>th</sup>, Indianapolis Public Schools voted to approve the innovation charter agreement with PLA at School 48. Building on our track record of success with IPS Innovation Charter Schools, PLA@48 would remain in the same building and continue to serve approximately 300 students in PreK through sixth grade.

**1. A resolution from the governing board of the organizer approving the activation and expansion.**

Please see attached.

**2. A 5-year Pro-Forma budget for the new school by completing ICSB's "Budget and Staffing Workbook" and a consolidated budget including all schools operated by the organizer within Indiana which can be found here.**

Please see attached.

**3. The last three years of audited financial statements and management letters of the school.**

Please see attached.

**4. A detailed budget narrative that provides a high-level summary of the budget.**

Please see attached budget workbook, which includes key budget assumptions. With regards to specifications outlined in the guidance document, please see below:

**a. The degree to which the school (and network) budget relies on variable income (e.g., grants, donations, fundraising)**

Under the PLA model, both the school and network budgets are financially sustainable on annual, non-competitive public funding. We reinforce this core framework through the following strategies:

- Ensure positive net income for our schools so that they are sustainable on public funding only;
- Utilize robust student enrollment strategies for year-to-year growth;
- Work towards building a three-month cash reserve;
- Ensure capacity-building initiatives and value-add programs are given priority and fully funded;

- Allocate at least 85% of school budget to planned expenses; and
- Secure state and federal grants with balanced budgets that allocate over 80% to planned expenses including systems that are embedded into the school for long-term, sustainable impact.

**b. The school's contingency plans to meet financial needs if anticipated revenues are not received or are lower than the estimated budget**

We have several mechanisms in place to meet financial needs if anticipated revenues come below forecast:

- We use conservative projections for recurring non-competitive public funding. Using this approach, our school will develop a financial model that is low-risk and well-positioned to address downward pressures on revenue.
- The enrollment set in the Pro-forma employs conservative ADA figures.
- We are conservative in funding estimates and hold them at current levels without any projected increases for future years.
- PLA schools maintain a healthy reserve of at least 60 days of cash at the end of each year.
- PLA schools have the ability to achieve budget efficiencies while maintaining academic rigor and financial stability.

Additionally, we employ several process strategies to ensure fiscal sustainability:

- Maintain a full year monthly cash flow projection to identify any variances against budget and allow time to adjust.
- Staff based on actual enrollment only.
- Evaluate all budgeted expenses again as they arise during the operational year to ensure that they are still necessary and the best use of funds.
- Adjust for any unexpected increases in expenses or decreases in funding by reducing non-essential operating expenses that do not impact the scholar experience and reducing non-essential staff expenses that do not impact the scholar learning environment.

At PLA schools, financial responsibilities have been consistently managed with success, including overseeing financial operations, grant allocations, forecasting, budgeting, and long-term strategic financial planning.

**c. How the school will ensure it has sufficient funds to cover all anticipated expenses, including but not limited to: (a) special education costs, (b) transportation costs necessary to ensure the school will be accessible for all enrolled students, and (c) required retirement plan contributions.**

As we shared earlier, we utilize a comprehensive process for developing sustainable budgets for our schools. This includes sufficient and compatible allocation of state and federal grants towards anticipated expenses, ranging from special education, transportation and retirement plan contributions. Our staffing assumptions are based on proven experience operating financially sustainable schools in the state, and we have thoroughly incorporated the required retirement plan

contributions in our calculation of benefits. For special education, we will ensure that the combination of basic grant and federal funds are sufficiently allocated to the school's SPED program expenses. We will also utilize the general operating budget to cover any remaining SPED expenses. We expect IPS to provide transportation services to the school.

## **5. A description of the organizer's current or planned capacity to manage multiple schools.**

Through our track record of improving student achievement, PLA demonstrates capacity to successfully manage multiple schools. Below please find a few highlights about PLA:

- A non-profit organization founded in 2013;
- Currently serving 1,760 scholars across five schools in Indianapolis; and
- Nearly 90% of PLA scholars come from low-income families.

The PLA educational model has several unique elements that drive academic growth of our scholars. Our educational model empowers both educators and students to grow and take ownership of learning. As a result, PLA schools consistently demonstrate improved student outcomes. An educational model that supports success leads to greater capacity to sustain and grow excellence over time. Rigorous curriculum, high quality professional development, a coaching cycle that develops teachers, enrichment opportunities for scholars, and authentic partnership with families are just a few of the elements that help us ensure the success of PLA students.

Highlights from our track record further illustrate the effectiveness of the PLA model, as we have:

- Transformed six F-rated schools to A-rated schools.
- Increased scholar passing rates on the state ELA and Math tests by 11% in just one year – the highest standardized test growth for all schools in Central Indiana.
- Earned school rankings of #4 and #5 in the district for strongest growth (with 8.2% and 8.1% increases in state test score proficiency growth, respectively).
- Accelerated progress towards grade-level proficiency with 72% of scholars showing standard to high annual growth on the state test.
- Achieved an average of 92% proficiency on the state third-grade reading exam at our founding school.
- Empowered PLA scholars in grades K-6 to gain an average of 1.3 years of annual growth toward grade-level proficiency on the STAR, nationally-normed assessment.

PLA is also blessed to have a strong leadership team whose role is to support the success of our schools and scholars. Our headquarters team includes 65 leaders. We bring decades of classroom experience, school and instructional leadership track record, project management expertise, and substantial knowledge in key operational aspects, including compliance, reporting, and program management. Furthermore, our leadership team offers exceptional experience in a wide range of functional areas, allowing our school leaders and teachers to focus fully on the academic success of our scholars. These include the implementation of on-site instructional reviews, climate and culture staff surveys, interviews, comparative analysis, and more in our Comprehensive Analysis framework; talent sourcing and staff recruitment for effective classroom instruction; creating and coordinating year-round, intensive and robust professional development including trainings; supporting operational management and enrollment efforts; establishing strategic community partnerships that

support scholar success; securing and allocating state and federal grants; and organizational capacity-building through the development of performance management and project execution dashboards.

The success of PLA scholars can be attributed to the comprehensive, high-quality services that PLA provides to its school partners and scholars. While some educational management organizations only offer human resources and accounting support, PLA provides the full spectrum of support that a school needs to thrive:

- An outstanding educational program (i.e., research-based curriculum, pacing guides, and assessments);
- Pre-service professional development and an on-going coaching cycle for teachers, as well as an online educator development portal (PLA University);
- Operational support—including payroll, accounting, HR, policy development, legal counsel, and grants management—so that our educators can maximize their efforts in delivering a high-quality educational experience to scholars;
- On-site quality assurance monitoring and support;
- Behavior and classroom management systems; and
- Parental engagement framework.

In addition to an exceptional team, PLA has built an extensive portfolio of tools and processes that support the success of our schools. A few examples of the tools used by our schools include:

- State-aligned weekly assessments, developed using Edulastic, which enable our schools to gauge scholar progress in vocabulary, grammar, cold reads and math, and then use this data to inform instructional decisions;
- Framework for effective Tier 2 instruction, supporting daily small group instruction for every scholar;
- Framework for effective PLCs, ensuring that weekly planning meetings are focused on data and leveraged to consistently improve student performance;
- PLA Teacher Coaching Cycle;
- PLA University;
- PLA Teacher Evaluation framework;
- PLA Leader Evaluation, a rubric outlining the successful behaviors of turnaround school leaders;
- PLA Leadership Coaching Cycle, which systematically supports the development of leaders;
- Pathways to Leadership, which is a uniquely designed fellowship program tailored to building the capacity of aspiring teachers and school leaders; and
- PLA Leadership Institute, a week-long intensive leadership training institute for school leaders.

Moreover, PLA ensures our capacity to successfully manage multiple schools by utilizing procedures and structures already in place to ensure student safety; healthy school finances; and federal, state, authorizer, and local compliance.

School Operations: As a result of the support provided to each school by the central office, we have

the capacity and processes in place to ensure the successful operation of multiple schools. The school administration, staff and school leaders will be supported by the central office, whose support services include professional development, payroll, policy development, legal counsel, and grants management. Through this support system, the central office will be able to manage the operational elements of running a school so that our educators can focus their efforts on what they do best—educating children. The strong leadership of our functional teams—compliance, finance, operations and development—ensures effective coordination with school personnel to obtain the proper information and data points necessary to complete any reporting requirements. These teams use real-time collaborative project management tools to oversee all school support activities. This is one of PLA’s key strengths: since the central office takes on this responsibility, the school can efficiently provide data when needed and focus their energy primarily on instruction. By implementing a process where school leaders and central office teams can effectively communicate and collaborate, we can ensure that our scholars will benefit from the increased capacity of PLA.

School Finance: A core strength of PLA is our implementation of financial processes and procedures that not only improve the efficiency of school financial operations but also provide strong separation of responsibilities, a clean audit trail, and clear processes for all financial transactions. At our schools, financial responsibilities have been consistently managed with success, including overseeing financial operations, grant reporting, forecasting, budgeting, and long-term strategic financial planning. As a result, financials have steadily improved from pre-operational planning through startup and growth to capacity. PLA schools have successfully managed federal, state, and local funding and have been able to meet all audit requirements.

Statutory, Regulatory, and Authorizer Compliance: PLA schools have a proven track record of compliance with state statutes, authorizer standards, and federal grant regulations, including:

- Maintaining no open corrective action items with the IDOE.
- Submitting on-time, accurate, and compliant authorizer reports and state compliance requirements.
- Ensuring programmatic and fiscal compliance of state and federal programs.
- Consistently receiving full accreditation status and showing compliance with all legal standards.

Student Safety: Schools implementing the PLA model have met all key metrics for student rights and safety for the past three years, according to authorizer ratings from the Indiana Charter School Board (ICSB) and IPS. Our safety practices represent the most up-to-date research on risk-reduction measures. PLA’s student safety systems and processes have proven effective. Safety measures include a single point of entry for each school, required check in and identification for all visitors, camera surveillance systems, and extensive safety training and drills (threat assessment/awareness, violence prevention, security procedures, and emergency planning). PLA has been, and will continue to be, in compliance with all applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of its charter agreement relating to safety, security, and health related services.

As further evidence of our capacity to successfully manage multiple schools, below please find qualifications of key members of our leadership team:

### **Earl Martin Phalen, Founder and Chief Executive Officer**

Widely recognized as one of the nation's top social entrepreneurs, Earl Martin Phalen is the Founder and CEO of the George and Veronica Phalen Leadership Academies. While at Harvard Law School, Earl founded Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL) in Boston, Massachusetts, which grew from a local community service project to a national non-profit educating 15,000 children annually and from an annual budget of \$12,000 to \$27.5M annually. Through his work in the out-of-school time sector, Earl and his team were encouraged to expand their 25-day summer program model to a year-round school model. The resulting network of K-12 public schools is called the George and Veronica Phalen Leadership Academies (PLA) in honor of his parents. Under Earl's leadership, PLA has grown from 1 school serving 300 students to a national network of 20 schools serving 8,000 students, while helping our most vulnerable communities achieve exceptional educational outcomes. In addition to transforming multiple F-rated schools into A-rated schools, PLA has empowered its scholars to consistently demonstrate educational growth each year. Beyond academics, PLA scholars have created original plays, delivered theatrical performances, and constructed their own submersible robots. Earl has been recognized by MSNBC, TIME, New York Times, Education Week, IndyStar, Black Entertainment Television, and Presidents Clinton and Obama. He holds a BA in Political Science from Yale University and a JD from Harvard Law School.

The impact of PLA, its leadership team and staff on the lives of children has earned recognition from numerous regional and national organizations and publications, including: Mr. Phalen's acceptance into the Pahara-Aspen Institutes' Education Fellows Program, a diverse group of leaders who are transforming America's public schools; and the Mitch Daniels Leadership Foundation's Daniels Leadership Prize, in which the former Indiana governor's foundation recognized Mr. Phalen as a leader who is making an exceptional impact across the state. PLA has also been recognized as the organization that was most outstanding in its contribution to education nationwide through the Make It Better Philanthropy Award.

### **Andrea Robinson, Chief Academic Officer**

Andrea received her BA from Indiana University in elementary education and her master's degree from Indiana Wesleyan University. Andrea worked as a teacher in the intermediate grades in a Title I elementary building, where she was recognized for her passion in teaching when she was honored with the district-wide Indiana Teacher of the Year award in 2009. She eventually became the instructional coach for her K-5 building where she used her knowledge of best practices to lead other educators in professional development, classroom management, differentiation, PBIS, tiers 1-3 instruction/intervention and data analysis to drive effective classroom instruction. Andrea has also provided professional development for the University of Indianapolis' elementary education program and for educational webinars with Kappa Delta Pi. Andrea most recently worked at the Indiana Department of Education in the Office of School Improvement as an Outreach Coordinator for Marion County, working closely with schools and districts to develop best practices for turnaround principles. After conducting classroom walk-throughs and leadership/staff interviews, she worked with the school leadership team to develop the next steps that met the needs of each individual school. She often provided differentiated professional development for each school for this process. Andrea also served as the IDOE case manager for a district in the State Development Network (SDN) to ensure the development of district system alignment and improve student achievement. Andrea's key strengths include professional development, classroom management, and differentiated instruction. She has worked as the lead trainer for the Indiana Department of Education and several school districts throughout Indiana. She works to ensure that our education model is implemented with fidelity by leading PLA's Coaching Cycles process, a key

component to PLA's professional development system for educators and oversight process to ensure the key elements of the model are implemented with fidelity.

### **Nicole Fama, Indianapolis Regional Director**

Nicole Fama is a seasoned educator with over 15 years of district, education, and innovation experience, along with a track record of success in urban school turnaround. Before coming to PLA, she taught for 12 years with IPS at various levels (third, sixth, and tenth grades at Title I schools). She also served as an IPS Dean of Student Discipline and Culture for six years before transitioning to her role as a building principal. During her time with IPS, she was part of the leadership team at Arlington Woods High School that founded Project RESTORE; she created, wrote, and coordinated all discipline policies and procedures under the new program. As part of this effort, Nicole has led turnaround efforts at three Indianapolis schools, improving their state ratings from Fs to As. She has gone on to build positive student, parent, and community relationships to sustain the academic results Project RESTORE creates. Nicole has been a principal for four years and is currently serving as school leader at both a K-6 building and a middle school. Both of these schools have earned and are maintaining an A-rating. While teaching Nicole was voted teacher of the year twice and was named a Hubbard Top 10 Outstanding Educator in 2014. She has also received the Above and Beyond the Call of Duty award, the Indianapolis Peace in the Streets award, and the Senator Richard Lugar Patriot award. Nicole served in 2016-17 as the committee chair of the Indiana Education and Testing Reform Panel after being directly appointed by former Governor Mike Pence. In 2017, Nicole was awarded with the highest honor the Indiana Governor can bestow, the Sagamore of the Wabash Award. Nicole has a BS in Elementary Education from Indiana University and a M.Ed. in Educational Leadership from Indiana Wesleyan University. Nicole continues to strive for excellence through her commitment to ensuring that as many scholars as possible have access to the PLA model.

### **Courtney Lumbley, Director of School Improvement**

Courtney's educational pathway began with a B.A. in Elementary Education from DePauw University, an M.Ed. from Indiana Wesleyan University in Curriculum and Instruction, and an endorsement for administration through WGU's Educational Leadership program. Her twelve years of classroom experience span grades three through twelve including Title I language arts, high ability, and German language instruction. Courtney taught in MSD Perry Township and Bartholomew Consolidated County Schools before serving in Franklin Township Community School Corporation as a teacher, instructional coach, and building administrator where quality instruction and collaboration for student growth was her focus. Courtney worked with teams of teachers implementing a data-driven Tier 2 and 3 intervention plan to impact student achievement. Before her role as a building administrator in Franklin Township, Courtney received the honor of Teacher of the Year for the district and finalist for the Indiana State Teacher of the Year. She was granted the Lilly Endowment Teacher Creativity Fellowship allowing her to travel overseas studying young heroes throughout history. Sharing her experiences with students and educators, she works to empower them to find their voice and realize their potential for change. Courtney believes all scholars are capable of academic success and is relentless in working for student achievement by supporting educators in quality instruction and programing to provide optimal learning opportunities for all scholars.

### **Nicole Watts, Director of Training**

Nicole brings over 12 years of education experience to PLA. She started as an Elementary teacher with Franklin Township (IN) Community Schools and took on roles with increasing leadership

responsibilities during her tenure. As an Instructional Coach, Nicole created common formative assessments and utilized data from these assessments to create and lead curriculum and instruction training for teachers and Instructional Assistants. Nicole was Chairperson of the Literacy and Leadership committees and also led a student support team in the creation of behavioral and academic intervention plans. Nicole has a Masters of Education from Indiana Wesleyan University and received her Principal certification from Lamar University.

### **Amber Deckard, Director of Recruitment**

Amber is an accomplished executive in the nonprofit industry. She has over 20 years' experience in nonprofit leadership, including human resources and talent management. Amber first joined the team in 2010 as a Regional Director for Summer Advantage, where she was instrumental in helping the program reach thousands of scholars across the country. In 2014 Amber was called to serve as a Regional Vice President for a national nonprofit charged with improving birth outcomes and health equity for moms and babies in the U.S. During her tenure, Amber was successful in building teams across 26 markets in the Midwest, as well as supporting a reduction in both premature birth and health equity disparities—both critical focuses for the foundation. In October of 2018 Amber rejoined the PLA Team as Director of Recruitment to help positively impact children across the country by partnering with our schools to source, attract, and hire exceptional educators who share our unwavering passion for empowering scholars from underserved communities.

### **Leticia Sampson, Director of Special Education**

Leticia came to PLA with 19 years of experience in special education. Her previous position was with Total Education Solutions where her services were contracted to assist schools in maintaining compliance in their special education departments. She had also been an integral team member of PLA's Michigan schools as a contracted employee. Leticia grew up in Detroit and has worked in many counties across Michigan. She also spent time in Washington, D.C., and was employed as the Program Director of a special education day school. Leticia obtained her Ed.S. from Wayne State University and is current working on her Ed.D. in Education Leadership and Policy Studies. In her free time, Leticia enjoys reading, traveling, and spending time with family.

### **Sharon Cruse Armstead, Chief Human Resources Officer**

Sharon brings over 15 years of in-depth HR experience. She has served as the HR Director for several multi-state organizations within the private and public sectors. During her 9 years with the Chicago Housing Authority and 8 years with Habilitative Systems, Inc. in Chicago, Sharon was instrumental in leading the HR department. Her accomplishments include the successful implementation and rollout of a new HR Information System, the design of a national training program, and the automation of multiple HR processes resulting in reduced costs and improved service to employees. Sharon earned a B.A. in Economics and Industrial Relations from Lincoln University and also holds a Senior Certified Professional certification from the Society for Human Resource Management.

### **Helen Dixon, Director of Human Resources**

Helen is responsible for leading the recruitment, selection and placement of all employees. Helen has over 10 years of recruitment experience. Prior to joining PLA, Helen served as National Director of Recruitment for New Leaders for New Schools, a non-profit which specializes in recruiting and developing exceptional teachers into urban school principals. Formerly the Director of Recruitment for the City of Chicago, Helen was the architect of an enterprise-wide recruitment program for 38,000 employees and 43 operating departments. Prior to the City of Chicago, Helen



served as a Senior Recruitment Officer and Marketing Manager for the Chicago Public Schools. During her tenure, she provided district-wide recruitment and employment guidance for 600 schools and implemented new strategies to meet annual workforce requirements. Helen's key strengths include talent recruitment, selection and development.

### **Tahirah Thompson, Operations Manager**

Tahirah graduated with honors from Howard University with a Bachelor's Degree in Business with an emphasis on Marketing. Prior to joining the PLA team, her major work experience included artist retail marketing with SonyBMG in New York, and analyst and project management work with Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E) in San Francisco. During her time at PG&E, Tahirah realized that she was passionate about children and education. Taking a leap of faith towards her passion, she transitioned from the corporate world to the education sector. Since changing her career path to education, she has served as a 6th, 7th, and 8th grade math interventionist, an 8th grade special education math teacher, and a 6th grade social studies teacher. In her most recent position, prior to joining Phalen, she has served as the Director of Operations at a turnaround charter school in Chicago. As an experienced Director of Operations, she has successfully implemented numerous school-wide systems and procedures, managed faculty and data, and worked side by side with the principal to improve the overall functionality of the school.

### **Melissa Ross, Director of Compliance & Reporting**

Melissa has 13 years of experience completing state reporting and providing compliance oversight for schools. Along with compliance and state reporting, Melissa has managed Title I programs and budgets. In her 12 years of compliance, Melissa has also been instrumental in helping her schools to receive grants. Before working in school compliance, Melissa was a Reading specialist for two years and taught in the classroom for 10 years within an Urban setting. Melissa completed her administrator's certification program at Oakland University in 2012 with a 4.0 average. Melissa received her Master's in Reading with a Reading Specialist Certificate and her Bachelor's Degree in English Language Arts with a Minor in Elementary Education from Grand Valley State University. Melissa has been a member of the Michigan Pupil Accounting & Attendance Association (MPAAA) for 13 years and a member of Volunteering for the Disabled (VAD) for 15 years.

### **Eva Spilker, Chief Financial Officer**

Eva's key strengths include financial management and leadership for both public and private-sector organizations. Eva has served as Controller and Finance Director at Diamondback Direct, an international division of Quadriga Direct Mail Holdings—a leading global provider of direct marketing services. Her responsibilities included all finance and accounting functions as well as short- and long-term forecasting, payroll and benefit management, internal and external reporting, executive team and board presentations, margin and audit management, and annual budgeting. Eva's career in finance began in the Corporate Financial Consulting Division of Ernst & Young in Baltimore, Maryland. She then transitioned to the Economics Group of CSX Intermodal where she developed long term planning models as well as all capital expenditure justifications and analyses. After CSX, Eva transitioned to a partner role in a regional advertising agency where she managed all finance and operations functions. Eva holds an economics degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Eva will develop the school budget; review and approve financial expenditures; oversee payroll for staff; manage fiscal reporting activities and audit requirements.

In sum, PLA has the people, systems and processes in place in ensuring a strong track record of improving student achievement.

## **6. Academic data from the organizer’s current schools operating within Indiana by completing the “Academic Performance Workbook.”**

Please see attached Academic Performance Workbook.

PLA’s research-based and scholar-focused approach has produced strong academic growth. The PLA approach is focused on collaboration and building long-term capacity in our partner schools to sustain academic excellence. Highlights from our track record illustrate the power of our model, and the effectiveness of our implementation, as we have:

- Transformed six F-rated schools to A-rated schools.
- Increased scholar passing rates on the state ELA and Math tests by 11% in just one year – the highest standardized test growth for all schools in Central Indiana.
- Earned school rankings of #4 and #5 in the district for strongest growth (with 8.2% and 8.1% increases in state test score proficiency growth, respectively).
- Accelerated progress towards grade-level proficiency with 72% of scholars showing standard to high annual growth on the state test.
- Achieved an average of 92% proficiency on the state third-grade reading exam at our founding school.
- Empowered PLA scholars in grades K-6 to gain an average of 1.3 years of annual growth toward grade-level proficiency on the STAR, nationally-normed assessment.

In the 2018-19 school year, PLA has helped to create the following academic growth for our scholars:

- Helped our sixth school move from “F” to “A” on the state accountability report card, surpassing the state average growth in proficiency for students living in poverty.
- In one of the most underserved communities in the state (Far Eastside of Indianapolis), where most public schools are D- or F-rated, PLA stands apart as the only public school to maintain its A-rating from the state for two years in a row.
- Helped middle school in Fort Wayne, IN (63% economically disadvantaged, 25% Black, 19% Latino) achieve A-rating in one year, surpassing district growth towards ELA proficiency by 13% for students living in low-income households.
- Moved another chronically underperforming school (rated D or F for the past four years) off the failing list, increasing math proficiency scores by 18% and doubled growth in ELA proficiency compared to the district.
- Helped partner district schools in Tampa increase proficiency on average by 8 percentage points based on the i-Ready assessment.

Furthermore, PLA has a proven track record of helping underserved students achieve significant academic gains. As we shared earlier, the vast majority of our students are students of color and children living in poverty. A strong example of our work is reflected in the academic growth of our schools in Indianapolis, where we have partnered with Indianapolis Public Schools for the past five years. In 2018-19, the State of Indiana shifted from the paper-based ISTEP exam to the computer-based ILEARN assessment. During this transition, districts and schools across the state saw significant declines in both ELA and Math assessment scores. As a result, state accountability grades

were “held harmless” by the Indiana Department of Education for the 2018-19 school year. Despite the massive decline in achievement scores across the state, PLA was able to help students from traditionally underserved populations achieve academic progress, as evidenced by the following notable results:

- Black scholars attending PLA-Indianapolis schools surpassed district performance by 15% on the math state assessment.
- Black scholars attending PLA-Indianapolis schools surpassed district performance by 7% on the ELA state assessment.
- Scholars attending PLA-Indianapolis schools qualified for free or reduced-price lunch surpassed district performance by 9% on the math state assessment.
- Scholars attending PLA-Indianapolis schools qualified for free or reduced-price lunch surpassed district performance by 2% on the ELA state assessment.

Overall, these academic data show that PLA’s educational model is positively impacting children who come from some of the most economically distressed communities in Indiana. As a result of continuous improvement processes built into our model, we expect our scholars to continue to make academic gains. Our support staff, teachers, school leaders, central office staff, and leadership have the skills, experience, and passion needed to truly make a difference in young people’s lives. Taken as a whole, PLA’s educational model, team, and infrastructure have built a strong capacity for raising student achievement.

**7. Information demonstrating the need for the new school in the proposed location, including whether or not a facility has been identified.**

The charter for which we are requesting activation is located within an educationally underserved and economically distressed neighborhood in Indianapolis. High-quality educational options are needed in this community to help more children meet Indiana’s challenging academic standards.

Louis B. Russell Jr. School 48 demonstrates strong educational need. Aside from 2018-19, when state accountability grades were held harmless, the school has received an F-rating in every school year since 2011-12, with the exception of 2012-13, when it earned a D. Table 1 (below) shows performance data from each school year dating back to 2014-15.

Table 1: School 48 Historical Performance			
School Year	School Rating	Language Arts Proficiency	Math Proficiency
2017-18	F	22%	10%
2016-17	F	33%	19%
2015-16	F	29%	20%
2014-15	F	34%	33%

School 48 is also situated in a neighborhood in which most public schools are struggling academically. The table below provides academic proficiency data for high-need public schools within a 2-mile radius of School 48, where the majority of students are children of color and children who qualify for free/reduced-price meals.

Table 2: Neighboring School Performance and Demographics						
School	Language Arts Proficiency 18-19	Math Proficiency 18-19	Grades Served	Students of Color	Free/Reduced Meals	Enrollment
Louis B. Russell Jr. School 48	8%	10%	PreK-6	94%	81%	290
Francis W. Parker School 56	16%	12%	PreK-8	85%	67%	348
James Whitcomb Riley School 43	5%	7%	PreK-8	95%	74%	426
Joyce Kilmer School 69	2%	1%	Grade 6	100%	66%	70

For these four schools, only 9% of students achieved proficiency in math and ELA based on the ILEARN assessments in 2018-19. These four schools serve populations of children that are already vulnerable: 92% of the children attending these schools are students of color, and 79% qualify for the free/reduced-price meal program. Historical performance further highlights the need for educational improvement:

Table 3: Historical School Ratings and Averages							
School	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Louis B. Russell Jr. School 48	F	D	F	F	F	F	F
Francis W. Parker School 56	B	A	A	A	F	D	D
James Whitcomb Riley School 43	A	D	D	D	F	F	F
Joyce Kilmer School 69	F	F	F	F	F	D	D

The need for high-quality educational opportunities is made more urgent due to the deep-rooted challenges facing children in School 48’s service area. The following data, collected by the Polis Center at IUPUI, illustrate a stark reality. In 2017, residents living near School 48 experienced a poverty rate of 26%, which is nearly double the poverty rate of the Indianapolis metropolitan area. Similarly, the neighborhood’s unemployment rate was 14%, which is more than double the unemployment rate of Indiana. In 2016, the rate of violent crimes per 1,000 people was as high as 36, nearly triple the rate across Marion County. Moreover, Polis Center data classifies School 48’s service area as a “food desert,” meaning its residents lack easy access to food. Under severe socio-economic stress, the life expectancy for residents in the neighborhood is nearly half a decade shorter than it is for Indiana residents at large.

Children who are already dealing with the challenges that accompany living in poverty deserve extra care and attention from adults who share their background and possess the expertise to guide them

to success. PLA has developed the educational model to meet these needs. As illustrated by Table 4 (below), the demographics of current PLA schools are strikingly similar to the demographics of School 48. PLA has achieved remarkable success working within communities with these demographics. Furthermore, PLA is led by a highly diverse leadership team dedicated to serving children of color. PLA’s organizational leadership reflects the community we serve: our organization is one of the very few public-school networks serving children of color in the country that is led primarily by people of color. We understand the needs of our community because we come from the neighborhoods we serve.

Table 4: Demographics Comparison: PLA Schools and School 48				
School group	Free/reduced price meals	Students of Color	Students in Special Education	English Language Learners
PLA Schools	88%	93%	13%	9%
School 48	81%	94%	24%	6%

Building on our long-standing partnership with Indianapolis Public Schools, we are confident in our capacity to help scholars at PLA@48 achieve significant academic growth. We will remain in the current IPS building, located at 3445 Central Avenue, and continue to serve approximately 300 scholars in grades PreK-6.

**8. A plan to engage the targeted community, including a description of community engagement efforts to date.**

PLA has in place extensive community engagement strategies to ensure buy-in from families and community members. We plan to use this expertise for PLA@48 leading up to the 2020-21 school year. As with our existing Innovation Charter Schools, our community engagement plan will be conducted in close coordination with IPS. Through our proven outreach process, parents and community members are actively engaged in the implementation of the well-rounded school model. This process includes informing parents and community partners of the school’s plans through advertisements, hosting events, and surveying parents during these meetings regarding their children’s enrichment interests and needs. Research bears out the importance of parental involvement. When parents are involved, students have higher test scores, increased motivation, and better attendance (Rose et al., 1997). Family participation is in fact twice as predictive of students’ academic success as family socioeconomic status (Walberg, 1984). PLA staff members have built relationships of trust with Indianapolis scholars and families which, in turn, will benefit PLA@48 in terms of recruitment, enrollment, and family outreach efforts.

We deploy a comprehensive family engagement plan comprised of a variety of tried and true strategies. Prior to the start of the school year, we host events like the ice cream social which serves as an opportunity for parents to meet teachers and school administrators. This event is typically well attended; each year, hundreds of families attend these events. We then hold an open house to familiarize parents with the core school components as well as expectations. We hold one-on-one parent-teacher meetings each month, called Parents-In-Touch days, where teachers provide an in-depth look at each child’s performance and behavior. We place a strong importance on these events, and teachers are required to have 100% attendance from the parents of their students. Additional family events include All-Pro Dads breakfasts and Muffins with Moms, which provide a warm

environment to get to know our parents, answer their questions and share how we will support their children. We also create and distribute an FAQ document to our families. Our community engagement team ensures that families know about upcoming changes and can express any concerns.

We plan to supplement the comprehensive needs assessment that PLA has already conducted in the Indianapolis community. We will analyze the needs of our children by reviewing student achievement data; holding further interviews with stakeholders; conducting further focus groups with scholars, families, and community members; visiting schools; and observing classrooms. School leaders, instructional leaders, and educators will attend pre-service trainings and biweekly meetings to give input on the school's conversion. Our leaders will also meet with Indianapolis PLA students and school leaders to incorporate best practices and further customize our approach.

We will actively engage parents and community members by circulating flyers and posters in highly visible locations in the community, such as community bulletin boards, churches, libraries, and parks. Building on the robust family engagement already in place, our leaders will work in coordination with IPS to make personal phone calls and coordinate automated outbound calls to keep families informed on PLA's plans for the 2020-21 school year. To provide a comprehensive view of the plan for the upcoming year, admission policy, and enrollment process, parents and community members will be actively engaged through town hall events and community meetings in which parents and key programmatic partners will have the opportunity to learn about the elements of our instructional approach.

To ensure a high level of community engagement, we plan to build on our successful community model and identify community partnerships that provide meaningful support to our scholars. Our partnerships typically focus around enrichment services, socio-emotional support, extended learning time services, and family support. Beyond formal partnerships, we want our community partners to participate in the life of our school. By maintaining an open-door policy and inviting the community to school events where they can meaningfully engage with our scholars, our community members can positively impact the life of our school.

Finally, our coordinated marketing and communications strategy will round out our community engagement efforts. PLA is committed to achieving excellence and building strong relationships with our communities through open, honest and ongoing communications. Our communications department will help PLA@48 coordinate strategic outreach to ensure that the community is informed about our partnership. The following list details PLA's external communication channels, which will be deployed to promote PLA@48:

- Formal and informal community outreach: We will notify local churches, community organizations, and after-school programs about PLA@48's opening, send letters home, conduct phone blasts, and hold events.
- In person, door-to door outreach: We will engage in canvassing and handing out pamphlets to every home in the area.
- Involvement in the community: We will attend meetings and visit community organizations serving our target population, such as YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, home-school associations, and local churches.

- Strong community network of nearly 2,000 families: We never underestimate the power of a parent network that strongly supports the school. PLA parents talk to neighbors, friends and co-workers about PLA’s schools; these positive, first person accounts help spread the word.
- News/media: We pitch two news stories to the press per month and collaborate with the media on coverage within our schools.
- PLA online presence: Phalen Leadership Academies uses its main web page, social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and a YouTube Channel with features from our schools), and the PLA Mobile App to share news, updates, and events with the community.
- Network external newsletters: Community members have the opportunity to register to receive our e-newsletters. Twice per month, we send out news about the schools and the PLA network.
- Paid media outreach: We utilize targeted mailers, radio campaigns, and billboards to reach community members.

**9. A completed “Experienced Operators Proposal Overview.**

Please see attached.

**10. A description of any planned changes from the approved school model(s) in the organizer’s original Charter Application.**

We have no plans to change the approved school model in PLA’s original Charter Application.

**11. A detailed start-up plan for opening the new school, including specific planning tasks by month, and the individual or individuals responsible for each task.**

Having launched multiple schools, PLA has fine-tuned its start-up plan for effective implementation. The following chart identifies key planning tasks. Please note this timeline is tentative and subject to change.

Table 5: Start-Up Plan for PLA@Louis B. Russell School #48							
Personnel: Planning Task	2020						
	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug
<b>Governance and Management</b>							
<b>CEO &amp; Development:</b> Charter activation application and approval							
<b>Operations:</b> Register for corporation and school numbers, as well as access to key IDOE data systems							
<b>Legal:</b> Develop agreement with school district							
<b>Operations &amp; Compliance:</b> Ensure Board of Directors is fully staffed and submit list of board members to ICSB, including resumes & contact information							
<b>Legal &amp; Compliance:</b> Complete state and federal filing requirements—registering as state vendor, ensuring good standing for IN Secretary of State, etc.							
<b>HR:</b> Provide written notice that principal has been hired to ICSB along with a copy of the head of school’s resume							
<b>HR:</b> Provide ICSB with updated organizational chart including names of specific individuals occupying key leadership roles at the school							
<b>HR:</b> Conduct expanded background check results for any new Board members; keep documentation on file and submit to ICSB							

<b>Operations &amp; Compliance:</b> Ensure board member names are posted and up to date on the school's website, per Indiana statute							
<b>Legal &amp; Compliance:</b> Submit to ICSB a copy of ratified board by-laws (if ICSB does not have ratified copy already or if changes have been made)							
<b>Operations, Compliance:</b> Submit to ICSB minutes from one Board meeting within the 60 days preceding the pre-opening site visit							
<b>Personnel: Planning Task</b>	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug
<b>Staffing</b>							
<b>Director of Recruitment:</b> Recruit and hire key staff, including Principal and School Secretary							
<b>HR:</b> Conduct expanded background check for school leadership; submit to ICSB and keep documentation on file							
<b>Principal &amp; Secretary:</b> Start date for key staff							
<b>Director of Recruitment:</b> Recruit all staff, including hiring or contracting school nurse as required by Indiana administrative code							
<b>HR:</b> Conduct expanded background checks for staff and volunteers (including parents) who have contact with children; submit to ICSB and keep on file							
<b>HR:</b> Provide a copy to ICSB of signed contract for certified Special Education staff, speech and language therapists, occupational and physical therapists, etc.							
<b>HR:</b> Provide a copy to ICSB of signed contract for qualified English Language Learner staff as required to meet the needs of enrolled students							
<b>Director of PD:</b> Coordinate PD for all staff, including training on FERPA, serving SPED students, and health record procedures							
<b>HR:</b> Create written staffing plan with number of teachers by grade level, subject area, and title, as well as admin positions; submit to ICSB and keep on file							
<b>HR &amp; Compliance:</b> Obtain copy of valid Indiana teacher's license for on-staff special education teacher of record; submit to ICSB and keep on file							
<b>HR &amp; Compliance:</b> Submit copies to ICSB of valid Indiana teacher's licenses with certification areas or proof that individual is obtaining license; keep on file							
<b>Director of Instruction and Curriculum &amp; Director of PD:</b> Begin ongoing coaching for teachers (Coaching Cycles)							
<b>Personnel: Planning Task</b>	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug
<b>Curriculum and Instruction</b>							
<b>Principal &amp; Compliance:</b> Prepare master school year calendar and daily class schedule							
<b>Principal:</b> Complete preparations to provide instruction in each approved grade							
<b>Principal:</b> Finalize lesson plans and pacing guides							
<b>Principal &amp; Secretary:</b> Order and appropriately distribute curricular materials, computers, and supplies							
<b>Personnel: Planning Task</b>	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug
<b>Families, Students and Community Engagement</b>							
<b>PLA Community Outreach Team (COT):</b> Community outreach and marketing (please see question 8 in this document for a full description)							
<b>Legal:</b> Submit student enrollment policy to ICSB, including enrollment deadlines, capacity by grade level, limitations per state law, and lottery process							
<b>Legal:</b> Submit written policies/procedures to ICSB for services to SPED students, student discipline, grievances, FERPA, and state Public Access laws							
<b>Legal:</b> Update Student and Family Handbook with above policies (including suspension/expulsion, school health records, and Board Meeting policies)							
<b>PLA COT:</b> Student recruitment and enrollment							
<b>Legal &amp; Director of SPED:</b> Ensure Staff Policies & Procedures Manual (SPPM) is aligned with IDEA/Article 7 in serving SPED students							



<b>Legal &amp; Director of SPED:</b> Ensure the school's health record procedures are included in the SPPM							
<b>Legal:</b> Ensure required staff procedures consistent with FERPA for storage/handling of student files are included in the SSPM; submit to ICSB							
<b>Principal &amp; Secretary:</b> Implement electronic system for maintaining student records							
<b>Principal &amp; Secretary:</b> Request and process student records, including immunization records/exemptions & records for students with special needs							
<b>Principal &amp; Secretary:</b> Secure student academic, attendance, discipline, test records, and (separately) health records in locked cabinets							
<b>PLA COT &amp; all school staff:</b> Host parent and community events							
<b>Legal &amp; Compliance:</b> Provide written assurances to ICSB regarding student records and electronic data system							
<b>PLA COT:</b> Ensure that master school year calendar and daily class schedule is available in both English and Spanish and distributed to all families							
<b>PLA COT:</b> Ensure that Student and Family Handbook is available in both English and Spanish and distributed to all families							
<b>Compliance:</b> Submit to ICSB any documents pertaining to enrollment lotteries held and keep on file							
<b>Compliance:</b> Submit to ICSB enrollment stats, including number of enrolled students, number of students on waiting list, and student rosters by grade level							
<b>Personnel: Planning Task</b>	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug
<b>Operations</b>							
<b>Operations &amp; Secretary:</b> Coordinate services with supplemental services providers/partners							
<b>Legal &amp; Operations:</b> Create specific written plan for preparing and responding to emergencies; post copies in the school and submit to ICSB							
<b>Secretary:</b> Ensure that Department of Public Works has installed school zone and speed limit signs							
<b>Legal, Operations &amp; Secretary:</b> Finalize food vendor and transportation services contracts per IDOE requirements; submit to ICSB							
<b>HR, Compliance, &amp; Secretary:</b> Obtain copies of expanded background checks for employees of supplemental service providers; submit to ICSB							
<b>Operations &amp; Secretary:</b> Coordinate appropriate state and local health department inspections and licenses; ensure compliance and submit to ICSB							
<b>SPED Director:</b> Submit to ICSB agreement with transportation provider regarding homeless students and students with transportation accommodations							
<b>Legal &amp; Compliance:</b> Provide ICSB with written assurance that updated school administration contact information has been provided to IDOE staff							
<b>Legal:</b> Submit written plan to ICSB for medication administration and provision of required health services (student hearing and vision)							
<b>Operations &amp; Compliance:</b> Submit to ICSB evidence that health services are available (e.g., school nurse on staff or contract, contract with health care clinic)							
<b>Personnel: Planning Task</b>	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug
<b>Finance</b>							
<b>CFO:</b> Create budget for school							
<b>CFO &amp; Compliance:</b> Submit to ICSB documented fiscal management policies and accounting system with internal controls; keep on file							
<b>CFO:</b> Establish School #48's bank account							
<b>CFO, HR, &amp; Compliance:</b> Provide to ICSB evidence of employment of accountant							
<b>CFO, Board Chair, &amp; Compliance:</b> Provide ICSB with a copy of the initial statement adopted by the Board of Directors							

<b>CFO &amp; Legal:</b> Provide written assurance to ICSB that School #48 has contracted a Certified Public Accounting firm to complete Independent Accountant's Report							
<b>CFO &amp; Compliance:</b> Provide ICSB with a copy of deduction policy and proof of contract with payroll company							
<b>CFO:</b> Develop and review cashflow framework for the school							
<b>Finance and Development:</b> Confirm all funding sources that School #48 is now eligible for as a charter school							
<b>Personnel: Planning Task</b>	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug
<b>Pre-Opening Site Visit and Final Items</b>							
<b>Legal &amp; Compliance:</b> Submit a letter of assurance to ICSB, signed by the Board Chair and School Leader, stating that all Prior Actions are complete							
<b>Regional Director &amp; Principal:</b> Host pre-opening site visit							
<b>Principal &amp; Compliance:</b> Obtain Prior Action Completion Letter from ICSB to verify that school meets all criteria specified in the Prior Action Checklist							
<b>Personnel: Planning Task</b>	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug
<b>Tentative Opening Day: August 11, 2020</b>							
<b>Scholars &amp; all Staff:</b> School opening							