Charter School Application

Application Introduction and Specifications

A charter school is a public school that operates under a contract, known as a charter, between the school's governing board (or organizer) and an approved charter school authorizer. Charter schools are created to provide high-quality, innovative educational options that meet the diverse needs of students and families in the communities they serve.

Education One at Trine University has developed a rigorous, phased application process to ensure that only qualified and mission-aligned applicants are invited to move forward. Submission of a full charter school application is by invitation only, following an initial evaluation of the applicant's Letter of Intent and submission of an Initial Proposal and participation in a Proposal Pitch. While Education One operates on an open application cycle, recommended submission timelines are outlined to support planning and ensure a strong school launch. It is recommended that an application be submitted 12-15 months prior to the intended school start date.

The application is designed to elicit clear, concise information to support a comprehensive and equitable review process. The Education One Application Review Team evaluates each submission using clearly defined criteria aligned to national quality standards. Education One reserves the right to reject incomplete or non-compliant applications. All official communication will be directed to the authorized representatives identified by the applicant group.

Education One is governed by its own Board of Directors, independent from Trine University. Final authorization decisions are made by the Education One Board, based on a formal recommendation from the Executive Director. Education One's application and review process is informed by national best practices and quality authorizing standards outlined by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA). For more information, visit www.qualitycharters.org.

Application Specification Instructions
- The application must be typed and single-spaced utilizing the template provided by Education One. Utilize the provided text boxes to answer questions. If a particular question does not apply, respond with a "Not Applicable." Questions without text boxes indicate that the response will be incorporated into an Application Attachment.
- The application narrative should not exceed 50 pages.
- For Application Attachments that require a specified template, ensure all pages of the document are completed.

Notice of Disclosure

All information submitted as part of the charter school application process, including financial documentation, is subject to disclosure under the Indiana Access to Public Records Act (IC § 5-14-3). This includes potential disclosure to the public and media.

If an applicant believes that certain portions of the application qualify for exemption under the Act, the applicant must obtain an advisory opinion from the Indiana Public Access Counselor before submitting any materials. If the Public Access Counselor supports the applicant's position, any information deemed confidential must be:
1. Clearly marked as confidential within the application;
2. Accompanied by a written statement citing the specific exemption(s) under the Act; and
3. Accompanied by the Public Access Counselor's written opinion supporting the exemption claim.

If this process is not followed, all information submitted will be considered subject to public disclosure unless Education One independently determines that specific content must be withheld under the Public Records Act. By submitting an application, the applicant and its representatives, employees, and agents acknowledge that:
- All application materials may be reviewed or copied by the public;
- Education One, Trine University, the Indiana Department of Education, and any associated officials, employees, or agents shall not be held liable for any such disclosures; and
- The applicant waives any rights to legal recourse or claims arising from the release of application materials in accordance with the Public Records Act.

Application Attachments

Education One utilizes a shared drive system to organize each applicant's submission, including all required application materials and attachments as outlined in the table below. Each applicant group will be provided with access to a secure shared folder that contains all necessary templates and resources to complete the application.

Within the shared folder, a subfolder titled "Application Attachments" will be used to store all required attachments. Please follow these guidelines for uploading:
- Each required attachment should be saved as a single PDF document.
- Name each file using the format: *[School Name] – Attachment [Number]* (e.g., "Example Charter School – Attachment 1").
- Upload all documents to the "Application Attachments" folder within the shared drive.

Once uploaded, applicants must link each attachment to the corresponding row in the table below by generating a shareable view-only link. Ensure that link access is set to allow anyone with the link to view the document. Add a space after each pasted link in the table to activate it for reviewers.

Failure to follow these formatting and upload instructions may result in delayed review of your application materials. If you experience technical issues with the shared drive system or have questions about the file naming or linking process, please contact Education One staff for assistance.

Application Attachment Table		
Attachment	**Description**	**Link**
Attachment 1	**Organizational Charts for Governing, Managing, & Staffing** *Submit an organization chart that shows school governance, management, and staffing structure for Year 1 and at full build-out.*	RSI-Attachment1
Attachment 2	**Planned Curriculum** *Provide a sample course scope and sequence for one subject for one grade level for each division (elementary, middle, high) the school will serve.*	RSI-Attachment 2 - MS RSI-Attachment 2 - HS
Attachment 3	**Enrollment Policy** *Provide the school's proposed enrollment policy. The policy should include a plan for compliance with any applicable desegregation order.*	RSI-Attachment 3
Attachment 4	**Proposed School Calendar** *Provide the proposed school calendar for the first year of operation, including the number of days/hours of instruction. Instructional calendar guidance from the Indiana Department of Education can be found here.*	RSI Attachment-4
Attachment 5	**A Description of Staff Responsibilities** *Provide a description of the major staffing positions that make up the school's structure (e.g., principal, instructional coach, teacher), including the core responsibilities of each role.*	RSI-Attachment 5
Attachment 6	**Proof of Secured Facility** *Provide proof of commitment for the facility.*	RSI-Attachment 6
Attachment 7	**Completed Budget and Staffing Workbook** *Use the workbook provided by Education One.*	RSI-Attachment 7
Attachment 8	**Budget Narrative** *Provide a detailed description of the assumptions and revenue estimates, including but not limited to the basis for revenue projections, staffing levels, and costs.*	RSI-Attachment 8

Attachment 9	**Discipline Policy** *Provide the school's proposed discipline policy.*	RSI-Attachment 9
Attachment 10	**Start-up Plan/Timeline** *Provide a detailed start-up plan for the school, specifying tasks, timelines, and responsible individuals. Include when the charter school is expected to begin school operations and have students attending.*	N/A
Attachment 11	**Non-Profit Status Proof/Board Policies** *Submit Articles of Incorporation, proof of non-profit status and tax exempt status (or copies of filings). Attach all existing organizational founding documents, approved board policies or resolutions, and a status update on policies the organization plans to adopt relating to school governance before opening*	RSI-Attachment 11
Attachment 12	**Signed Statement of Assurances** *Submit one completed and signed Statement of Assurances on behalf of the board. Use the template provided by Education One.*	RSI-Attachment 12
Attachment 13	**School's Founding Team, Leadership Team, and Governing Board** *List the members of the school's founding team, proposed leadership team, and governing board. Include full resumes that contain contact information for each individual listed.*	RSI-Attachment 13
Attachment 14	**Board Member Notice of Disclosure** *Submit completed and signed information sheets for each board member. Use the template provided by Education One.*	RSI-Attachment 14
Attachment 15	**Board Code of Ethics & Conflict of Interest** *Provide the board's proposed Code of Ethics and Conflict of Interest policy.*	Rooted Attachment 15
Attachment16	**Term Sheet for Contract** *If engaging with an EMO/CMO, provide the term sheet, draft proposed management contract detailing limits and evidence that the service provider is authorized to do business in Indiana.*	N/A
Attachment 17	**Insurance/Levels of Coverage** *Provide a list of the types of insurance coverage the school will secure, including a description of the level of coverage.*	RSI-Attachment 17
Attachment 18	**Evidence of Community Support** *Provide evidence of support from community partners (i.e., letters of intent/commitment, memoranda of understanding, and/or contracts).*	RSI-Attachment 18
Attachment 19	**Historical Performance Workbook** *If applicable, use the workbook provided by Education One.*	RSI-Attachment 19
Attachment 20	**3 Years of Audited Financials for IN Schools** *If applicable, provide the last three years of audited financial statements for the school(s) and the most recent internal financial statements.*	RSI-Attachment 20
Attachment 21	**3 Years of Audited Financials for Whole Organization** *If applicable, provide the last three years of audited financial statements for the organization as a whole and the most recent internal financial statements*	N/A
Attachment 22	**Litigations** *If applicable, provide a summary of the demand, any response to the demand, and the results of the arbitration or litigation.*	RSI-Attachment 22

Executive Summary

Proposed School Information	
School #1	Rooted School Inc.
Address	5750 E. 30th Street
School District	Indianapolis Public Schools
Planned Year of Opening	2020
Model or Focus	College and Career Readiness

Legal Group Name	Rooted School Inc.
Primary Contact Person	Ma'at Lands
Primary Contact Email	mlands@rootedschoolindy.org
Primary Contact Cell Phone	317-998-0045

Applying as a/an [New School] [Existing School][Replication]
If applying as an existing school, please indicate the school's first year of operation, the current authorizer, and the year renewal of the current charter will take place.
Rooted School Indianapolis
First Year of Operations- 2020
Current Authorizer- Office of Education of Innovation
Year of Renewal- Fall 2026

Does the applicant group seek approval for multiple campuses under a single charter? [Yes] [No]
If yes, please indicate how many. (1)
Indianapolis

Does the applicant group already operate schools elsewhere in the United States? [Yes] [No]
If yes, please indicate where.
Insert Text Here

Will the applicant group partner with an Education Service Provider (ESP)? [Yes] [No]
If yes, please provide the name of the ESP.
Insert Text Here

Has the applicant group had any charter school applications under consideration by any other authorizer(s) in the United States, within the last five years? [Yes] [No]
If yes, please indicate the state, authorizer name, proposed school name, application submission date, and decision date for each applicable application
Insert Text Here

Mission and Vision: Provide an explanation of why this proposed school is the right fit for the intended community and how it aligns to the mission and vision of the school. The response should include the proposed school's mission and vision, an overview of the educational model that will be implemented, and a description of the community the school intended to serve.

The mission of Rooted School Indianapolis (Rooted) is to provide our students personal pathways to financial freedom. We exist to see our students academically prepared and financially free. Rooted currently co-locates at Eastern Star Church's facility and provides a safe and secure place for students. We see high school students, particularly high school students from the poorest quarters of the population, as an untapped talent source for generating economic growth. Nobel Prize economist James Heckman found that 50 percent of lifetime earnings inequality is determined by factors present in the life of a person by age eighteen. This means that the longer it takes for our most financially insecure young adults to get high paying jobs, the less likely it becomes that they will obtain a high paying job. This is not a matter of hard work. This is the consequence of fading economic mobility—the fair chance to get ahead.

At Rooted, we believe that our students can reach their fullest potential when they are given access to the region's high-wage jobs in tandem with an academically rigorous high school education. We ultimately aim to disrupt the cycle of poverty by ensuring that Rooted students are equipped to succeed in their post-secondary plans, whether that be obtaining a college degree, building the next groundbreaking company or working in a high-wage job.

Starting with the local technology sector, Rooted will guide students to meet the rigorous demands of the college of their choice while partnering with local companies to expose students to the world of work. In this way, students form connections between algebra and app development, English class and digital marketing, history and community organizing. Through this approach, students can start to understand the value of education, not through memorization but through problem-solving real-world issues.

We make our students a competitive pool of talent by collaborating with local industries to shape our curriculum. This helps us prepare students for the demands of the dynamic workplace. Students work with industry-grade technology while learning and meeting state core academic standards. This will give students an advantage over their peers if they decide to enter their community's most promising companies upon graduation.

Founding Team: Provide the full name, current job title and employer, and connection with the proposed school for all persons on the founding teams, adding lines as needed.

Full Name	Current Job and Employer	Connection with Proposed School
Ma'at Lands	Rooted School Indianapolis	Founder/Executive Director
David McGuire	Rooted School Indianapolis	School Leader
Devan Heiber	Rooted School Indianapolis	Director of Academics
Diane Tarapata	Rooted School Indianapolis	Operations Manager

Enrollment Summary: Complete the table below, indicating grade level and enrollment projections for the school's first five years.

	Year 1 *2026*	Year 2 *2027*	Year 3 *2028*	Year 4 *2029*	Year 5 *2030*
Grade Levels Served	7-12	7-12	7-12	7-12	7-12
Total Enrollment	175	175	175	175	175

Describe rationale for the grade levels served and number of students at year one and the basis for the growth plan illustrated.

The school's initial grade configuration was intentionally designed to align with our mission, instructional model, and operational capacity. We began by serving a limited number of grade levels in order to concentrate resources on building a strong academic culture, establishing consistent instructional practices, and providing intensive student support. Launching with a focused grade band allowed leadership and staff to develop deep relationships with students and families, refine curriculum and assessment systems, and ensure fidelity to the school model before expansion.

This approach also supports continuity for students as the school grows, enabling us to add grade levels in a planned

and predictable manner while maintaining program quality and student outcomes.

The strength of any high-quality school lies in the people who bring its mission to life, from the founding team and leadership to the community stakeholders and future educators. This section evaluates the depth of the founding team's understanding of the community they intend to serve, their capacity to engage diverse stakeholders, and their ability to assemble the talent and infrastructure necessary to successfully design, launch, and sustain a high-performing charter school.

Applicants are asked to demonstrate how their community engagement, coalition-building efforts, leadership experience, and staffing strategies are aligned to the school's mission, vision, and educational model. The responses provided in this section will offer critical insight into the team's readiness to build a school that is responsive to community needs, built on access for all students, and staffed by professionals prepared to drive strong academic and operational outcomes.

1.1 Community and Coalitions

Meets Standard Expectation
- The founding team has a deep understanding of the community the proposed school seeks to serve.
- The founding team builds and maintains relationships across diverse interest groups and engages others in understanding, supporting, and acting on behalf of the mission.
- The founding team can navigate power and influence within local systems, structures, and people

1. Describe the community the school seeks to engage and the target student population.

Unless there is a significant shift in U.S. policy, it would take 228 years for the average black family (84 years for the average Latino family) to obtain the same amount of wealth as the average white family.[1] And despite gains in income and wealth, even when it comes to Americans with comparable levels of education, the median net worth of whites remains nearly 10 times that of blacks. This is the difference between white families having a median net worth of $171,000 compared to $17,600 for blacks and $20,700 for Latinos. When it comes to asset building and disrupting multi-generational cycles of poverty,[2] this gap has significant consequences for people of color in a city like Indianapolis.

Indianapolis is uniquely positioned to find a solution because it is at the heart of this national crisis. According to the POLIS Center at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, the city has a general poverty rate of 22 percent and a child poverty rate of 33 percent, both well above national averages and disproportionately affecting people of color. From 2005 to 2013, the Annie E. Casey Foundation reported that Indianapolis saw a 41 percent increase in the percentage of children living in poverty; only four cities had larger increases: Seattle, Phoenix, Jacksonville, and Las Vegas. All of these numbers underscore that millions of children nationally, and thousands locally, are living in families who are barely surviving financially which can affect their well-being and their ability to succeed as adults.

Few neighborhoods feel this more palpably in Indianapolis than the far eastside which has become a cradle of the city's poverty crisis. People of color make up 75 percent of the neighborhood's residents; it maintains a 29 percent poverty rate and a 14 percent unemployment rate. If a quality education is the potential bridge to higher-paying jobs and financial security, the far east side will remain in disrepair. In Marion County, 43 percent of all students attend A and B rated schools compared with the far east side's 12 percent.

Coupled with the financial insecurity crisis that is crippling people of color, *Ascend Indiana* recently reported that at least 300,000 new jobs over the next decade will require a post-secondary credential (not necessarily a two or four-year college degree). This highlights a widening disparity between job growth and a decline in the working-age population from 2018-2028. With Indiana facing a shortage of new talent, our communities will need innovative and bold solutions to address the real possibility that local companies will consider leaving the region in search of talent. This is where we believe Rooted can work alongside several local stakeholders to pursue transformational work.

2. Identify key stakeholders the founding team has engaged with (e.g., families, students, community leaders, business people, elected officials, organizations, and others) and describe:
   ○ Their support for the proposed school, including any commitments they have made. (Include letters of support or similar, as appropriate.)
   ○ Any reasons for strong opposition, and strategies to mitigate this.

The founding team of Rooted School Indianapolis engaged a broad and diverse group of stakeholders, including East Side families and residents, students, community leaders, nonprofit organizations, higher education partners, and local and national business leaders, particularly within the technology and innovation sectors. Community engagement efforts included a recent survey of 90 East Side residents and stakeholders, the results of which demonstrate strong alignment with Rooted's mission and model. Survey data showed that 98.5 percent of respondents affirmed support for Rooted's mission and goals, while 97.8 percent expressed a shared understanding of the need for multiple pathways to financial security and career success following high school graduation. In addition, 100 percent of respondents affirmed the importance of a strong family–community–school partnership, a foundational pillar of Rooted's design, and 97.8 percent agreed on the relevance of Rooted's mission. Respondents also strongly supported Rooted's self-paced learning model combined with targeted remediation and enrichment, indicating that the proposed school is a strong fit for the far East Side Indianapolis community.

Rooted secured significant support from a wide range of organizational and industry partners who view the school as both a community investment and a future talent pipeline. The Mind Trust has invested directly in Rooted Schools to support the launch of the Indianapolis model. Postsecondary and talent-development partners such as Ivy Tech Community College, TechServe Rooted's emphasis on industry-recognized credentials, financial literacy, and college-to-career pathways. Community-based organizations provide wraparound services, intervention support, and potential facility collaboration. Many of these partners have submitted formal letters of support, which are included in the application.

At this time, Rooted has not encountered organized or sustained opposition. Potential concerns, such as questions about differentiation within the local school landscape or alignment with workforce demand, have been proactively addressed through transparent community engagement, data-driven design, and strong partnerships with employers and higher education institutions. Rooted's emphasis on economic mobility, career-connected learning, and collaboration among families, schools, and community partners directly responds to expressed community needs and mitigates common sources of resistance. Overall, stakeholder feedback and commitments indicate broad-based support for Rooted School Indianapolis and strong confidence in its ability to serve students, families, and the regional workforce effectively.

3. Summarize the founding team's approach to gathering community input and explain how this input shaped the school design.

The founding team of Rooted School Indianapolis took a deliberate, community-centered approach to gathering input and designed the school to ensure that community voice is both continuous and influential. In addition to early surveys, listening sessions, and conversations with East Side families and partners, Rooted intentionally created multiple, accessible entry points for ongoing feedback. One such strategy is the use of community "Lunch and Learn" sessions, hosted by the school in partnership with neighborhood organizations and local leaders. These informal gatherings allow families, residents, and community partners to learn more about Rooted's programs while also providing real-time feedback on school design, student supports, and community needs. By meeting community members in familiar, low-barrier settings and centering dialogue over presentations, Lunch and Learns create space for honest input from voices that may not typically participate in formal meetings.

This community feedback directly shaped Rooted's policies, programs, and practices. Central to the school design is the Advisory program, which functions as the nerve center of student development and family engagement. Each student is paired with a consistent advisor who supports academic and social-emotional growth while serving as a primary point of contact for families. Advisors are required to communicate with families at least every two weeks,

reflecting community input that emphasized frequent, proactive, and relationship-based communication. Rooted also established My Rooted, the school's parent organization, to formalize family voice and partnership in shaping school programming, policies, and culture. Through regular meetings, My Rooted solicits parent and community input, increases family engagement events, supports student recruitment and retention, and expands communication and learning resources for families.

For deeper leadership engagement, Rooted created the Family Leadership Council (Rooted School Advisory Council), composed of parents and community members nominated by educators, neighborhood groups, and board members. Council members receive leadership training and serve as community advocates, helping to craft and execute Rooted's community involvement strategy. The Council leads committees focused on event planning, communication, volunteering, and student and family support, creating structured and systematic ways for community members to provide feedback and take action. Finally, community input underscored the importance of supporting entire families, not just students, which led Rooted to incorporate Adult Education Workshops in partnership with the ROCKopen to parents and the broader community. Together, surveys, Lunch and Learns, advisory relationships, family organizations, leadership councils, and workshops ensure that community input meaningfully shapes Rooted's school design and continues to inform its evolution over time.

4. Describe coalition-building successes and challenges, including the team's strategies for overcoming these challenges. Include any coalition-building strategies planned between now and the potential school opening.

The founding team of Rooted School Indianapolis has prioritized coalition-building as a core strategy for launching and sustaining a school that is deeply embedded in the East Side community and aligned to regional workforce needs. One of Rooted's most significant coalition-building successes has been the development of a broad, cross-sector network that includes families, community organizations, higher education institutions, workforce intermediaries, and local and national employers, particularly within the technology sector. These partnerships have resulted in tangible commitments, with companies and advisory and board participation from leaders across education, technology, and community development. This coalition reflects Rooted's intentional strategy of aligning educational outcomes with economic opportunity and has helped establish early credibility and momentum for the school.

At the community level, Rooted has successfully built trust by anchoring the school within the Eastern Star Church and The ROCK Initiative ecosystem and by engaging families through surveys, listening sessions, Lunch and Learns, and ongoing relationship-based structures such as Advisory, and the Family Leadership Council. These efforts have helped overcome a common early challenge: skepticism rooted in past experiences with short-lived or externally driven school initiatives. Rooted addressed this challenge by emphasizing transparency, demonstrating long-term commitment to the neighborhood, and elevating community members into formal leadership and decision-informing roles within the school's governance and engagement structures.

The team has also faced challenges in aligning diverse stakeholder priorities, particularly balancing family expectations for immediate academic support with employer and postsecondary partners' focus on long-term workforce readiness. Rooted has navigated this tension by clearly articulating its dual mission of academic growth and economic mobility, and by designing a model that integrates self-paced learning, remediation, enrichment, and career-connected experiences rather than positioning these priorities as competing goals. Regular communication, shared planning sessions, and clear role definition have been key strategies for maintaining alignment across the coalition.

Rooted continues to deepen and formalize coalition-building efforts by expanding its Family Leadership Council, increasing the frequency of community Lunch and Learns, and executing memoranda of understanding with additional employer and postsecondary partners to support work-based learning and credential pathways. The team also plans to strengthen collaboration with neighborhood organizations to coordinate student supports and family services, and to engage elected officials and civic leaders through site visits and briefings to build broader public awareness and

support. Collectively, these strategies position Rooted to continue overcoming coalition-building challenges while strengthening a durable, community-driven network in advance of school opening and beyond.

1.2 Founding Team

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Meets Standard Expectation

- The founding team has the relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities to execute in areas of education, finance, governance, and the proposed school's identified key design elements.
- The founding team demonstrates a track record of success in a variety of endeavors, large and small, as well as experience with failure and a demonstrated ability to learn, grow, and adapt.
- The founding team demonstrates an awareness of their areas for growth and how they plan to address them.
- The founding team understands how the organization will have to mature.

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1. Explain how the founding team has the relevant skills, knowledge, and abilities to develop, start up, and operate the proposed school.

Ma'at Lands

Ma'at Lands is the founder and Executive of Rooted School—Indianapolis a secondary school serving 7-12 grade students. Born and raised on the eastside of Indianapolis, she is a graduate of North Central High School, Tennessee State University and Marian University. She started her teaching career as a science teacher in Indianapolis Public Schools. After 7 years of teaching and leading she transitioned to a career in non-profit serving as the Youth Director and then as an Assistant Director for Fay Biccard Glick Neighborhood Center at Crooked Crook, responsible for the overall operations and administration and development of all programs. In this role she worked with families and was able to understand the importance of community organizations and educational entities working together to effectively execute on academic outcomes and improve the quality of life for all. Determined to provide access and opportunities for all students, she returned to the K-12 sector where she felt she could have the most impact while partnering with the community organizations as a resource. She completed her Building Level Administrator Certification from Marian University and returned to work as a teacher and administrator in a public charter school in Indianapolis responsible for coaching and developing teachers, establishing foundations for successful classrooms, providing data to inform the development of the schools' strategic plan aligned with the school and network goals. She is currently completing her doctoral degree in Organizational Leadership.

Dr. David McGuire- School Leader

Dr. David McGuire is a school leader with 15+ years of experience in education, including eight years as a principal. His leadership journey has centered on improving student outcomes, developing and mentoring educators, and creating learning environments where every student is safe, challenged, supported, and affirmed. Dr. McGuire has successfully led school turnarounds, guided strategic school growth, and built strong partnerships that extend the impact of schools into the broader community.

He is deeply committed to expanding pathways for educators, building leadership pipelines, and advocating for equitable access to high-quality education. His work reflects a belief that schools thrive when they are rooted in equity, excellence, and belonging. Now serving as School Leader at Rooted School Indy, Dr. McGuire continues to champion a vision where students graduate prepared for both college and high-wage careers. He is also expanding his impact at the system level through district leadership, nonprofit executive work, consulting, and leadership coaching, continuing his mission to build strong schools, strong leaders, and stronger communities.

Dr. Devan Heiber- Director of Academics

Devan Heiber is an instructional leader whose career has centered on collaborating with diverse professionals, leaders, and learners to optimize student, teacher, and content development. Her professional experiences span curriculum

design, instructional coaching, and systems-level academic leadership, all grounded in a commitment to research-based best practices. Devan's dedication to education relies on the continual examination, innovation, and refinement of instructional approaches to ensure students receive rigorous, equitable, and engaging learning experiences.

Over the years, she has developed a deep understanding of the importance of academic equity and the authentic dissemination of knowledge that narrows learning gaps and improves classroom experiences across contexts. As Director of Academics at Rooted School Indy, Devan leads instructional strategy, educator development, and the implementation of Rooted's future-ready, competency-based model. Her work reflects a commitment to ensuring every student has access to high-quality instruction that empowers them to succeed in both college and high-growth career pathways.

Diane Tarapata- Operations Manager

Diane brings over five years of experience working in partnership with schools in her role as an Operations Manager, supporting strong organizational systems and effective school operations. She has collaborated closely with school leaders and staff to manage day-to-day operations, coordinate schedules and communications, and ensure key initiatives are implemented smoothly. Her responsibilities have included overseeing operational logistics, supporting school-based events, maintaining compliance-related documentation, and improving internal processes to strengthen efficiency and accountability. Diane's steady leadership, attention to detail, and commitment to supporting school communities make her a trusted operational partner in educational environments.

2. Conduct a gap analysis of the founding team's capacities and plans to fill gaps with training, new team members, future hiring, and/or coalition building.

Our current team brings strong experience in school leadership, operations, and student support; however, as the school grows, additional capacity will be needed to ensure consistent implementation of student services, compliance, and accountability systems. While current team members have experience supporting student needs and managing operational requirements, the team recognizes the need for a dedicated leader to oversee special education, 504 coordination, MTSS, attendance, state reporting, and compliance with all applicable state and federal regulations.

To address this gap, the school will create a Director of Student Services & Compliance position. This role will be responsible for ensuring full compliance with IDEA, Section 504, civil rights requirements, and state accountability expectations, while also leading systems that support student success and well-being. The Director will work closely with the school leader, operations team, and instructional staff to monitor student service delivery, manage documentation, oversee training, and ensure timely reporting and audit readiness.

In addition to hiring this role, the founding team will strengthen capacity through targeted professional development in special education law, student discipline procedures, attendance interventions, and compliance monitoring. The school will also build partnerships with external service providers to ensure high-quality implementation and technical assistance.

1.3 Staffing

Meets Standard Expectation
- The founding team develops compensation packages (salary and employment benefits), systems, and strategy that are likely to attract and retain strong staff.
- The founding team develops recruitment and hiring strategy, criteria, timeline, and procedures that are likely to result in a strong staff that meet ESEA requirements for being "Highly Qualified" and are well suited to the school

- The founding team has the relevant knowledge to develop a plan for supporting, developing, and annually evaluating school leadership and teachers that is likely to produce and retain a successful staff.

1. Provide and discuss specific evidence that the proposed school leader demonstrates the capacity to design, launch, and manage a high-performing charter school with the anticipated student population.

Ma'at Lands brings more than ten years of experience as a school leader, including over six years as a founder of a charter school with direct responsibility for creating, managing, and executing annual operating budgets. In this role, Ma'at led budget development aligned to staffing models, compensation structures, and benefit costs, ensuring fiscal sustainability while prioritizing competitive salaries and staff retention. Ma'at has also completed a certificate in School Finance from Georgetown University, strengthening expertise in public school finance, budgeting, compliance, and long-term financial planning. In addition, Ma'at's experience as Assistant Executive Director at the Fay Biccard Glick Center included responsibility for managing organizational budgets, monitoring expenditures, and aligning financial decisions with programmatic goals—experience that directly informs the development of sustainable compensation systems and staffing strategies.

Dr. David McGuire demonstrates deep and proven capacity to design, launch, and manage a high-performing charter school serving a diverse student population, including students of color, students with disabilities, and students requiring targeted academic and social-emotional support. Across more than a decade of experience as a teacher, assistant principal, district leader, and principal, the leader has consistently driven measurable improvements in student achievement, school culture, enrollment, and organizational sustainability.

As Principal of Rooted School Indy (2024–present), Dr. McGuire has already demonstrated strong leadership in a grades 7–12 charter setting. Attendance improved from 88% to 92% through the launch of a comprehensive attendance initiative that integrated family outreach, mentorship, and early-warning systems—an essential indicator of effective school management for the anticipated student population. Additionally, our Parent Advisory Council increased family engagement and participation in decision-making, with 80% of students represented at Parent Teacher Conferences, demonstrating the leader's commitment to authentic family partnership.

Previously, as Principal of Tindley Accelerated Schools (2016–2022), the leader successfully led the instructional and cultural transformation of a K–6 school serving a predominantly low-income student population (90% students of color, 11% special education, 13% English Language Learners). Under this leadership, the school increased enrollment from 200 to 300 students, expanded grade levels, and maintained 90%+ student and staff retention for three consecutive years. The leader also guided the school through two successful charter renewals, providing direct evidence of the ability to meet academic, operational, and governance expectations required by authorizers. Targeted literacy instruction and data-driven interventions led to consistent annual gains in IREAD-3 proficiency, while strong parent engagement systems resulted in over 90% family participation.

Dr. McGuire's experience as Assistant Principal and Talent Acquisition Specialist for MSD Lawrence Township further demonstrates readiness to manage complex systems at scale. In this dual role, the leader oversaw special education compliance and culture in a K–6 school serving over 700 students, while simultaneously leading districtwide recruitment and retention efforts across 20+ schools serving 17,000+ students. This experience reflects strong operational acumen, human capital strategy, and compliance knowledge—critical competencies for leading a high-performing charter school.

Finally, Dr. McGuire's foundational experience as a 7–12 ELA teacher provided direct insight into the academic, behavioral, and postsecondary needs of secondary students. Through rigorous instruction, tutoring programs that increased exam performance by 10%, and leadership in college and career readiness initiatives, the leader built a strong instructional foundation that continues to inform school design decisions.

Collectively, this record of results provides evidence that Dr. McGuire possesses the vision, instructional expertise, operational discipline, and community-centered leadership required to successfully design, launch, and sustain a high-performing charter school aligned to the needs of the anticipated student population.

2. Outline the proposed school's salary ranges and employment benefits (retirement and health care) for all employees, as well as any incentives or reward structures that may be part of the compensation system. Explain the school's strategy for retaining high-performing teachers.

The proposed school offers a competitive, transparent, and growth-oriented compensation system designed to attract and retain high-quality educators and staff. Teacher base salaries follow a structured step scale aligned to years of experience and demonstrated effectiveness. Entry-level teachers begin with salaries ranging from $51,000–$54,000, with an average starting salary of approximately $53,000. Annual step increases , allowing teachers to progress to salaries exceeding $95,000 by year 12. This predictable growth structure rewards longevity, performance, and professional growth.

School leaders, operations staff, and support staff receive salaries that are benchmarked against comparable charter and district roles in the Indianapolis region to ensure competitiveness and equity across roles.

All full-time employees are eligible for a comprehensive benefits package that includes:

- **Health insurance** (medical, dental, and vision)
- **Employer-supported retirement benefits- TRF**
- **Paid time off**, including sick leave and personal days
- **Family and medical leave**, with compensation determined by role and coverage needs
- **Support for certification and licensure**, used selectively and aligned to school needs

These benefits are designed to support employee well-being, financial security, and long-term retention.

In addition to base salary, the school offers multiple opportunities for additional compensation through stipends and bonuses, ensuring staff are rewarded for leadership, extended responsibilities, and impact.

Athletics and Extracurricular Stipends

All employees are eligible for athletic and extracurricular stipends with prior approval. Stipends are awarded based on scope, duration, and complexity of work, with clear eligibility requirements (minimum student participation and time commitment).

- **Athletic head coaches and lead extracurricular sponsors** receive base stipends by sport and level, with a **10% longevity bonus for each consecutive year** in the role (capped at $2,500 or 50% of the base stipend).

- Extracurricular stipends range from **$600 to $2,400**, depending on duration and competitiveness.

Non-Athletic Leadership and Program Stipends

Teachers may earn additional compensation for leadership and schoolwide contributions, including:

- Grade-level chairs
- Content leaders
- Teacher leader task forces

- Emerging leaders
- Mentorship roles
- Family Action Council participation
- Translation services
- Summer operations and tutoring roles

These stipends range from **$500 to $5,000**, depending on complexity, time commitment, and leadership responsibility.

Bonus Structure

The school implements a values-aligned bonus system that reinforces high performance and mission alignment. Bonuses are awarded annually and tied to four core areas:

- **Preparation**: High attendance and strong planning systems (up to $1,000 annually)
- **Growth**: Achievement of professional goals and advisory attendance ($1,500)
- **Excellence**: Alignment to state accountability metrics, academic outcomes, and school culture indicators (amount determined annually)
- **Community**: Contributions to enrollment, recruitment, family engagement, and student belonging

Additional incentives include:

- **$250 per enrolled student** recruited and retained through October 1
- **$500 per teacher** successfully recruited and retained for a full year

All stipends and bonuses are taxable and awarded upon completion of required duties.

Teacher Retention Strategy

The school's retention strategy is grounded in competitive compensation, professional growth, leadership opportunities, and strong school culture. Teachers are incentivized to remain at the school through:

- A clear and predictable salary growth pathway
- Multiple opportunities to earn additional compensation without leaving the classroom
- Leadership development pathways (e.g., Teacher Leader Program, Emerging Leaders)
- Recognition and financial reward for attendance, growth, excellence, and community contribution
- Strong onboarding, and professional learning systems

By combining fair base pay, meaningful incentives, and a culture that values excellence and belonging,Rooted is positioned to retain high-performing teachers and reduce turnover while sustaining instructional quality.

3. Describe the strategy, plans, and timeline for recruiting and hiring the teaching staff, including the school's plan for hiring "Highly Qualified" staff in accordance with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Explain other key selection criteria and any special considerations relevant to the school's design. Outline the

Since opening, Rooted School Indianapolis has spent the past six years refining and executing a recruitment and hiring strategy that has consistently resulted in a strong, mission-aligned, and highly qualified teaching staff. The school's approach is informed by operational experience, data from prior hiring cycles, and lessons learned about retention, instructional effectiveness, and leadership development.

Recruitment Strategy and Proven Pipelines

Over six years of operation, Rooted School Indianapolis has successfully recruited teachers through multiple established pipelines, including Teach For America (TFA) and Indianapolis Teaching Fellows (ITF). These partnerships have provided access to diverse, rigorously selected candidates with strong instructional foundations and a commitment to educational equity. In addition, the school recruits experienced educators through regional and national job boards, professional networks, and partnerships with educator preparation programs.

Recruitment messaging has been refined over time to clearly communicate the school's mission, instructional model, professional growth opportunities, and compensation structure, resulting in stronger candidate pools and improved alignment between candidates and the school's design.

Hiring Timeline and Staffing Based on Operational Experience

Rooted School Indianapolis follows a consistent annual hiring timeline informed by six years of operating a school:

- **Fall–Winter:** Review enrollment projections and staffing needs; refine job descriptions and compensation ranges based on budget and retention data.
- **Winter–Early Spring:** Begin active recruitment, screening, and interviews, with priority given to early hiring of high-need subject teachers and leadership roles such as Multi-Classroom Leaders.
- **Spring–Early Summer:** Finalize offers, complete credential verification, and onboard new hires.
- **Late Summer:** Complete remaining hires and provide pre-service professional development prior to the start of the school year.

This timeline allows the school to secure strong candidates early while maintaining flexibility to respond to enrollment or staffing changes.

Highly Qualified Staff and ESEA Compliance in Practice

For the past six years, Rooted School Indianapolis has ensured that all instructional staff meet ESEA "Highly Qualified" requirements. The school verifies bachelor's degrees, licensure or certification, and subject-area endorsements prior to employment and monitors ongoing compliance. When hiring teachers through alternative certification pathways such as TFA or ITF, the school ensures that all requirements are met within established timelines and provides support for completion as needed.

Selection Criteria Aligned to Rooted's School Design

Through six years of experience, Rooted has identified the selection criteria most predictive of teacher success in its model. In addition to required qualifications, hiring decisions prioritize:

- Demonstrated or emerging instructional effectiveness.
- Strong alignment with Rooted's mission and student-centered, real-world learning design.
- Ability to build strong relationships with students and families.
- Openness to coaching, feedback, and continuous improvement.
- Collaboration and leadership potential within team-based instructional structures.

These criteria reflect the school's emphasis on instructional quality, culture, and long-term retention.

Multi-Classroom Leaders and Career Pathways

Rooted School Indianapolis is also in the process of implementing a Multi-Classroom Leader (MCL) model to strengthen instruction and retain high-performing teachers. Over time, this structure has created clear career pathways that allow effective educators to expand their impact without leaving the classroom. MCLs provide coaching, modeling, and instructional leadership across multiple classrooms while maintaining direct student impact.

This approach has improved teacher development, increased instructional consistency, and supported retention by recognizing and compensating teacher leadership through stipends or differentiated pay.

Compensation, Bonuses, and Retention Supports

Over six years of operation, Rooted has refined a compensation structure designed to attract and retain strong educators. In addition to competitive base salaries and benefits, the school offers:

- **Bonuses** tied to performance, leadership responsibilities, or school-wide goals.
- **Stipends** for additional duties, including mentoring, curriculum development, extended learning time, and Multi-Classroom Leader roles.
- Transparent compensation structures that support fairness, sustainability, and staff retention.

Hiring, Evaluation, and Dismissal Procedures

Rooted School Indianapolis follows clear, consistent procedures for hiring, evaluating, and dismissing staff, grounded in six years of operational practice. All employees undergo required state and federal criminal background checks prior to employment. Hiring decisions are based on structured interviews, performance tasks, and reference checks.

Staff are evaluated annually using a combination of classroom observations, student outcomes, and professional responsibilities. When performance concerns arise, Rooted implements a documented improvement process that includes feedback, coaching, and clear expectations. Dismissal decisions, when necessary, are conducted in a fair, timely, and legally compliant manner.

This section evaluates the overall design and instructional approach of the proposed school, including its alignment to the mission and responsiveness to the needs of the intended student population. A high-quality school model clearly defines what success looks like for students and provides the structures, strategies, and systems needed to reach those outcomes. Applicants must present a compelling mission and vision, outline the school's educational philosophy and key design elements, and demonstrate how the curriculum, instruction, and assessment systems will be implemented effectively.

In doing so, the founding team should clearly show how the proposed model supports academic achievement, student growth, and long-term readiness. Additional attention is given to how the school will serve all students, maintain a safe and productive learning environment, and build the foundation for long-term sustainability through sound planning, clear goals, and a strong understanding of the community landscape.

2.1 Mission, Vision, Purpose

Meets Standard Expectation
- The proposed school's mission is clear, cohesive, and measurable, and centers students and the community. The mission outlines the proposed school's purpose, what it does, and for whom.
- The vision outlines a clear aspirational long-term goal or ideal state the school aims to achieve.

1. Outline the proposed school's mission. Include a description of the indicators of success in achieving the mission and how you will evaluate the extent to which the school is achieving it.

The mission of Rooted School (Rooted) is to provide our students personal pathways to financial freedom. We will do this by altering the trajectory of Indianapolis' most financially insecure students, thereby increasing their access to four-year colleges/universities and technical programs preparing them to compete in the city's high-growth, high-wage industries.

At Rooted, we believe that our students can reach their fullest potential when they are given access to the region's high-wage jobs in tandem with an academically rigorous high school education. We ultimately aim to disrupt the cycle of poverty by ensuring that Rooted students are equipped to succeed in their post-secondary plans, whether that be obtaining a college degree, building the next groundbreaking company or working in a high-wage job.

While our mission is focused on the achievement of students, our success has the potential to transform an entire community by supplying homegrown talent to our region's fastest-growing companies, raising the median income and improving the quality of life for students and their families.

We anchor our mission with Rooted School's Four-Year Goal:

We exist to see our students academically prepared and financially free. Some students will arrive at financial freedom with a college degree, others will not. We teach students how to learn in an ever-changing world, develop their skills for the most in-demand job sectors and create technology that is transformational. Our school in Indianapolis will offer opportunities for students across the digital sector. Students will graduate with sought-after jobs in technology—paying well above the regional median wage—or go on to college with a sense of purpose and a relevant context for being there. All students will leave with a job offer in one hand and a college acceptance letter in the other.

Rooted School Indianapolis defines success using indicators that align closely with the Indiana Department of Education's (IDOE) accountability framework, while also advancing the school's mission of postsecondary readiness and economic mobility. Academically, Rooted measures success through student growth and proficiency on state assessments (ILEARN, SAT), with particular emphasis on year-over-year growth, consistent with IDOE's focus on student progress as a core accountability measure. Graduation outcomes are also central, including four-year cohort graduation rates, on-track indicators, and credit attainment, ensuring students remain on pace to earn a Core 40 or

Core 40 with Honors diploma as required by the state.

Rooted further aligns to IDOE priorities by tracking college and career readiness indicators, including dual credit completion, industry-recognized credential attainment, and postsecondary enrollment or employment outcomes, all of which are embedded in Indiana's Graduation Pathways requirements. The school also monitors attendance and chronic absenteeism rates, recognizing IDOE's emphasis on engagement as a predictor of academic success. School quality measures such as student persistence, re-enrollment, and behavior data are used to assess climate and culture, while family engagement metrics, such as participation in advisory conferences, My Rooted meetings, and leadership councils, support Rooted's commitment to stakeholder partnership and continuous improvement.

Collectively, these indicators allow Rooted to meet and exceed IDOE expectations while providing a comprehensive picture of student success that includes academic growth, graduation readiness, postsecondary preparation, and long-term economic opportunity.

2. Outline the proposed school's vision (i.e., describe what will be different if the school successfully meets its mission).

Rooted exists to interrupt generational poverty and racial inequity by expanding educational and economic opportunity for students on Indianapolis's far eastside. By preparing students for college, careers, and the evolving workforce, especially in high-growth sectors, Rooted connects rigorous academics to real-world problem solving and industry partnerships, building talent, mobility, and long-term community prosperity.

We see high school students, particularly high school students from the poorest quarters of the population, as an untapped talent source for generating economic growth. Nobel Prize economist James Heckman found that 50 percent of lifetime earnings inequality is determined by factors present in the life of a person by age eighteen. This means that the longer it takes for our most financially insecure young adults

2.2 Key Design Elements

Meets Standard Expectation

- Key design elements of the educational model are aligned with the mission and designed to achieve positive outcomes for the proposed student population.
- The approach to serving special populations is likely to lead to high-quality educational outcomes for students with diverse needs.
- The school environment will be safe, supportive, and conducive to student learning for all students.

1. Describe and justify the proposed school's key design elements, including how they align with the mission; the research basis and/or examples of other schools or programs the founding team researched or visited; what they learned from them; and how that may be applied to this school.

Rooted School will feature a combination of academic approaches to achieve its mission and vision: to increase the talent supply by fast-tracking its most financially insecure youth to higher paying jobs.

The Rooted School instructional model is fundamentally designed around two core beliefs. The first is that all students can and will learn when provided a robust, high quality, relevant curriculum across the core content areas. The second is that students learn best when exposed to a hybrid-learning environment that optimizes each student's school experience through personalization. Hybrid instruction consists of self-directed modules, direct instruction, and small group instruction.

Our innovative classrooms represent the connected world in which our students live, shifting away

from direct instruction as the sole mode of information delivery to one that more closely mirrors the 21st century collegiate instructional models, blending real-time lecture and direct instruction with distance-learning and virtual lab studies.

Through the use of a hybrid learning model, classroom teachers will harness the power of technology to create more engaging, efficient, and success-oriented learning environments. These environments create the conditions for students to not only learn skills needed in 21st century workplaces, but earn credentials and certifications that are industry recognized to prove that they have learned those skills and are employable.

Rooted's learning model focuses on three components: self-directed personalized learning, small group instruction, and project-based learning. This learning model helps teachers personalize instruction and meet each student's unique learning needs.[5]

Self-Directed Learning: Rooted defines self-directed learners as those who need very little, if any, redirection because they know their goals and are focused on achieving them. Students will be able to move at their maximum pace through all of the required course content from 9th through 12th grade.

Students create the tempo for their own learning. Once students have achieved mastery, they are able to continue on to new or more challenging problems instead of having to wait on their peers. Teachers are able to spend more time with struggling students and give them targeted support.[6]

More details describing how "Self-Directed Learning" manifests in Rooted's model appear below.

Flex/Individual Rotation Blended Learning Model: All students have a playlist of courses that they complete. Teachers and other adults provide face-to-face support through activities such as small-group [7] instruction, group projects, and individual learning.

Instructional staff (i.e. teachers, principal, director of curriculum) develop and adjust the scope and sequence based on the Indiana Academic State Standards and Core 40 graduation requirements for each content area. Planning begins with curriculum mapping, then follows with unit planning and finally, daily lesson planning.

Teachers then create playlists (i.e. detailed course syllabi housed in Google Classroom similar to Blackboard™, Canvas™ or Angel™) that include:

>   (a) Daily lesson objectives
>   (b) Alignment to learning standards
>   (c) Graded and ungraded formative assessments
>   (d) Graded and summative assessments
>   (e) Weekly core readings and supplemental texts
>   (f) Semester projects
>   (g) Enrichment work
>   (h) Unit skills, content and essential questions

Personalized Learning Plans: All Rooted students are held to clear, high expectations, while each student follows a competency-based progression through Rooted's badging system.

Each course is divided into 5-7 badges, or units of study, wherein students have to demonstrate a mastery grade of at least 75 percent in order to move onto the next badge. Progress benchmarks are available for students to assess their course progression. This allows for what Daniel Pink, in his book *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, calls, "Mastery, autonomy, and purpose."

Pink drew upon research undertaken by psychologists Harry Harlow and Edward Deci in 1971. They

discovered that rewards can fail to improve people's engagement with tasks, and may even damage it. Another study was carried out by MIT professors in 2017 and recorded similar findings.

Through personalized learning plans, we aim to create high intellectual engagement by providing students a compelling rationale for the way they're learning and why, a clear bar for mastery, and as much autonomy as possible to meet that standard. Through our technology use, teachers are empowered to make more effective and timely data-driven instructional decisions using available student progress and performance data. Teachers are aware of student challenges and successes putting them in a position to adjust instruction immediately. This high degree of efficacy enables our teachers to design their instruction around the unique needs of each student or focus group.[9]

Small Group Instruction: In order to personalize the instructional experience, Rooted designs its lessons around small-group instruction, individualized instruction, remediation and enrichment. Teachers provide targeted intervention informed by students' daily work, formative badge assessments, and interim/summative standardized test results. This approach has yielded significant growth in students' diagnostic assessment results as well as in their overall literacy and numeracy.

The school year calendar includes opportunities for:

> (a) Collaborative planning
> (b) Review/adjustment to learning standards
> (c) Individual remediation/enrichment
> (d) Ability-grouping

There are four district assessments that take place throughout the year. After delivery of each assessment there are designated "data-analysis days" that are built into the school-year calendar. On these days, teachers meet together with administration to discuss common academic trends, track individual student academic growth and progress, analyze group and class progress as well as teacher and/or curricular efficacy. The results from this analysis inform the whole group tier movement.

Additionally, faculty use formative assessments weekly to gather data on individual progress. This data is then analyzed and teachers reassign and differentiate groups. This flexible grouping based on achievement data provides the opportunity for differentiated and personalized instruction.

Flexible grouping may include:
> (c) Movement into or out of individual, independent work time
> (d) Changes to curricular mapping that would include recursive planning and re-teaching

Project-Based Learning: In order to demonstrate mastery learning, Rooted students apply their skills in solving real-world challenges through project-based learning. Students work on projects that are designed with our industry tech partners in mind. By example, our *Lee Circle Project* trained students in Autodesk Inventor, a typical CAD software program used throughout the industry for 3D printing and manufacturing. Students addressed the question, "How might New Orleans build monuments that better represent what our city stands for?"

As a result of these projects, students saw the impact of their work in the community. Students also acquired career and technical education credits through a number of different technology pathways and industry-focused projects. Using a backward-design approach, the goal is to solidify industry-specific skills that positively impact clients. In turn, our students graduate more prepared to choose a college and a concentrated field of study or directly enter entry-level positions within our partner network.

A more detailed description of how project-based learning manifests in Rooted's model follows:

● *Industry-focused Project-based Learning*: In alignment with Indiana's Department of Education

Technical Honors Diploma, for two hours each day, students will acquire career and technical education credits and credentials in technology pathways through industry-focused projects. Rooted's teachers will co-plan these projects with local industry partners in technology.

● **Project Exhibitions:** Rooted invests students and staff in the collaboration with industry partners through public project exhibitions. Alongside their general education classes, and with the aid of their content teachers and industry partners, students will spend a trimester working toward the completion of a project within a technology pathway. At the end of the semester, students are evaluated by a panel of industry experts that specialize in the skills and topics relevant to the project. Students are able to participate in a peer-review process similar to what would occur if they were working at a technology firm in Indianapolis. As a result, project exhibitions are challenging experiences that create a significant source of pride.

● **Internships:** In addition to planning curriculum in the short-term and offering students jobs in the long-term, Rooted's industry partners will offer year-round internships throughout the ninth grade year and every year thereafter.

2. Summarize and provide a rationale for the proposed school's chosen instructional approaches.

The instructional approach of Rooted School is informed by four years of research, piloting, and continuous improvement drawing from leading national school models and research on blended, project-based, and competency-based learning. Influenced by *Blended: Using Disruptive Innovation to Improve Schools* and the work of the Christensen Institute and Blended Learning Universe, Rooted integrates technology-enabled personalized learning to meet students at their individual academic levels. School models such as High Tech High, Science Leadership Academy, and the Leadership High School Network informed Rooted's emphasis on rigorous, interdisciplinary project-based learning that builds deep content knowledge, real-world problem solving, and student agency. Summit Public Schools and Acton Leadership Academy contributed to Rooted's competency-based progression model, ensuring students advance based on demonstrated mastery rather than seat time. Finally, P-TECH's integration of career pathways and postsecondary alignment shaped Rooted's focus on college and career readiness through authentic learning experiences. Early curriculum consulting from Dr. Tim Kubik and Dr. Heather Driscoll ensured these approaches were implemented with fidelity and coherence. Collectively, these models support an instructional design that is student-centered, mastery-driven, and aligned to preparing students for success beyond high school.

Below are some models that informed the iteration of Rooted that exists today following four years of research and piloting:

- (Book) Blended: Using Disruptive Innovation to Improve Schools by Michael B. Horn and Heather Staker
- (School Model) High Tech High (San Diego, CA)
- (School Model) Summit Public Schools (Northern California and Washington State) ● (School Model) The Leadership High School Network (Albuquerque, NM)
- (School Model) Acton Leadership Academy (Austin, TX, and around the world) ● (School Model) Science Leadership Academy (Philadelphia, PA)
- (School Model) P-TECH (Brooklyn, NY)

- (Researchers) Christensen Institute
- (Researchers) Blended Learning Universe
- (Researcher) Dr. Tim Kubik, an expert on project-based learning and early curriculum consultant at Rooted School
- (Researcher) Dr. Heather Driscoll, an expert on competency-based school models and early curriculum consultant at Rooted School

3. Explain the plan for ensuring the curriculum aligns with state content standards while being rigorous, engaging, and effective for all students.

Rooted will use a comprehensive curriculum designed to address Indiana State Standards, Grade Level Expectations and national standards (NWEA, ACT College Readiness) and is based on four principles:

- Instruction that is systematic and explicit, designed to help students acquire, practice, and apply skills and knowledge
- Courses that promote deep learning and metacognition
- Courses that embed the principles of Universal Design for Learning , incorporating multiple [15] means of representation, expression, and engagement to meet all students' individual needs.

Curriculum will be designed using the principles of **Backward Design** (Wiggins and McTighe) from the Indiana State Standards and ACT College Readiness Standards. Standards alignment for the selected curriculum has been completed as has the rationale for curriculum selection, members of the curriculum design team and a curriculum review cycle (see Attachment 6 for complete details). Teachers will leverage data to inform instruction and utilize varied strategies to meet the needs of all learners

4. Describe the proposed school's approach to serving students with disabilities and English learners.

Philosophy of 360° Student Supports: The 360° Student Support Team provides wrap-around supports for the general education population. In addition to providing wrap-around supports for the general education population, the 360° Student Support Team will also be devoted to serving students with exceptionalities. These supports are designed to ensure that all skills-fragile students consistently work toward rigorous post-secondary options.

Legal Responsibility: Rooted is committed to supporting all students and providing them with an equitable, rigorous education during their time at Rooted.

In serving students already identified as having exceptionalities under the law or whom Rooted suspects may have such exceptionalities, Rooted will provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and will comply with all applicable state and federal statutes, including Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974, and all special education rules as outlined in Article 7 of Indiana Code with fidelity. Rooted will educate students with disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and with their non-disabled peers to the extent appropriate and allowed by each student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Rooted will not discriminate against students having or suspected to have disabilities in admission and enrollment practices. Rooted will implement an inclusive, heterogeneous educational model that will serve all students in a manner that maximizes academic potential and will provide them with the foundational skills, knowledge and character needed for future success.

Professional Development for Staff: All staff will be trained during summer professional development

and throughout the year by the 360° Student Support Team in how to develop action plans that best meet the needs of all students following each interim/diagnostic assessment. Topics will include Universal Design for Learning (UDL), RTI, progress monitoring, data collection, IEP due process and discipline, high ability strategies and supports and ELL strategies and supports.

Plan for Support: Rooted expects approximately fifteen percent of incoming students to be identified as Special Needs (including Gifted and Talented). Rooted will provide individualized services coordinated by the 360° Student Supports Team to support all of its students' unique needs. Rooted's structure embeds small group instruction into its daily schedule (small group pull outs of six to ten students) while most students are in self-directed learning time. The small groups will enable a small teacher-student ratio, allowing teachers to spend more time one-on-one with students who need extra assistance and allowing students that need more rigor the opportunity to access more challenging work until sufficient progress has been achieved to move students out of pull-out groups. Rooted will also embrace UDL principles.[20] For students with disabilities, Rooted will provide a comprehensive array of accommodations, modifications and support that will enable them to thrive academically and socially, and in the self-directed learning environment to the greatest degree possible. Rooted will strive to maximize accommodations and minimize modifications so that students can access the full curriculum to the greatest extent possible.

Monitoring Individualized Education Plans (IEPs): The 360° Student Support Team at Rooted will be responsible for maintaining and progress monitoring the IEPs of all students with exceptionalities. Families will be contacted at least ten days prior to IEP meeting to ensure maximum family attendance and participation. General education teachers will also be consulted to ensure that IEP goals reflect content aligned with the general education curriculum. IEPs will be rewritten annually at an Annual Case Review. The Special Education Coordinator will lead ongoing progress monitoring with the general education teachers. Parents/guardians are integral members of the IEP team and they will be updated each quarter by the 360° Student Support Team and every two weeks by their student's advisor about the progress being made on IEP goals.

IEP Annual Review Protocol: Below are the steps every teacher needs to be aware of regarding IEP meetings and forms that must be completed prior to the meetings.

- At the beginning of the school year, all teachers will receive a snapshot of students with an IEP or a 504 plan. The snapshot will contain the child's qualifying disability, goals from the previous year and services received.
- All teachers will be responsible for following up with the Special Education Coordinator with regard to viewing the IEP and implementing the strategies required by the IEP or 504 plan. ● Each grading period, SPED Coordinators, in conjunction with teachers, must also complete progress reports specific to each student with an IEP that shows which goals have been met and what strategies were used to meet those goals. These reports will be provided to parents and families with the quarterly report card.
- Prior to the expiration of the IEP, an Annual Case Review Meeting must be convened to update the IEP. A month before the expiration of the IEP, the Special Education Coordinator will distribute a worksheet to be completed by the general education teachers that can speak to the student's performance. Math and English teachers, specifically, will be asked to provide a more in-depth analysis that requires grade-level performance estimates and the setting of new goals for the updated IEP. This information may be provided in a conference between the Special Education Coordinator, English Teacher and Math Teacher.
- One general education teacher must be present at the Annual Case Review meeting to be convened prior to the expiration of the previous IEP. The general education teacher represents the general curriculum and verifies that the student has access to the general curriculum in the classroom.

- The Special Education Coordinator will conduct the IEP meeting.
- All members of the IEP team must be present at the IEP meeting unless the parent provides written consent to excite a member from the meeting.

● At the conclusion of the meeting, all participants must sign the IEP in order to validate and implement the new plan.

Evaluation: Any new recommendations for a Special Education evaluation will originate with the 360° Student Support Team after a student has gone through a series of interventions without appropriate progress. The 360° Student Support Team will document progress and regularly communicate with families on next steps, including referring the student for special education services. All steps will be taken to ensure students remain in general education settings to prevent over-labeling. However, with parent consent, referrals will be made if the student is not responding to academic and/or behavioral interventions.

Students who have IEPs will be promoted to the next grade based on successful completion of the goals of their IEP. However, students with IEPs who have significant attendance or behavioral problems unrelated to their IEPs may be retained for these reasons. All promotional decisions for students with disabilities are made by the IEP team.

Comprehensive Mental Health Services: Through the IEP process and 360° Student Support Team interventions described above, it is likely that some individual students may require additional support to ensure their mental well-being. At full capacity, Rooted will employ at least one full-time social worker. This mental health staff, in addition to external partners (such as Children's Bureau and Meridian Health Services), provides individualized services to all children in need. Rooted's mental health staff will ensure the following goals are met:

1. Students who need assistance are engaged in mental health interventions;
2. Increase assisted students' GPA over time;
3. Demonstrate growth in mental health assessments on a quarterly basis;
4. Assisted students will spend more time in the classroom (number of minutes spent in class will increase over time);
5. Assisted students will decrease targeted behaviors and increase demonstration of Rooted's core values; and
6. Provided services will meet a minimum 90 percent attendance average.

When a student is referred for mental health services, initial contact will be made with a referral source within three hours, student contact will be made within forty-eight hours of referral and next steps are delivered to the referring party and families within 72 hours. Additionally, Rooted will work with community organizations to support engagement and interventions for students with social and emotional needs.

English Language Learners
A WIDA proficiency level 1 and 2 service plan is focused on providing intensive English language support for students at the "Entering" and "Emerging" stages of English language development, emphasizing basic communication skills like understanding simple instructions, responding with short phrases, and using visual aids to support comprehension across all subject areas, with a strong emphasis on building vocabulary and foundational grammar structures.

Key components of a WIDA level 1 and 2 service plan:

1. **Focus on essential vocabulary**: Prioritize high-frequency vocabulary used in daily life and classroom settings, incorporating visuals, gestures, and repetition for reinforcement.

2. **Simple language structures**: Utilize short sentences with basic grammar patterns, focusing on subject-verb agreement and consistent sentence structure.

3. **Visual supports**: Heavily rely on pictures, diagrams, charts, and real-life objects to aid comprehension and communication.

4. **Oral language development**:
- Prioritize listening and speaking skills through activities like:
    - Greeting and basic conversation: Simple questions and answers, introductions, asking for help.
    - Following directions: One-step instructions with visual cues.
    - Storytelling: Sharing stories with pictures, repeating key phrases.
    - Choral responses: Repeating key words and phrases together as a class.
- Reading strategies:
    - Picture-based comprehension: Matching pictures to words or sentences.
    - Labeling: Identifying key vocabulary with visual labels.
    - Read-aloud with support: Teacher reads aloud with visual aids and key vocabulary highlighted.
- Writing support:
    - Copying and tracing: Practicing letter formation and basic sentence structures.
    - Sentence completion: Filling in missing words in simple sentences.
    - Drawing and labeling: Using pictures to convey ideas and practice vocabulary.
- fContent area adaptations:
    - Simplified language: Use clear, concise language in all subject areas.
    - Visual aids: Incorporate visuals, diagrams, and real-life examples to explain concepts.
    - Hands-on activities: Engage students through active learning and manipulatives.

Key considerations for a WIDA level 1 and 2 service plan:

1. **Individualized learning** : Tailor instruction to each student's specific needs and language development level. Students will receive 1:1 and small group tutoring in both language and content development.
2. **Collaboration with specialists:** Work closely with ESL teachers, speech therapists, and other support staff to develop comprehensive plans.
3. **Regular assessment:** Monitor student progress using WIDA assessments and monthly growth data reports (ellii.com; mobymax, etc.) to adjust interventions as needed.
4. **Family engagement:** Involve parents in their child's language learning process by providing information and strategies for supporting language development at home.

5. Describe how the proposed school will ensure a safe environment conducive to student learning and development. Include the approach to student discipline and well-being.

Rooted School is founded on the belief that all students are capable of developing the skills and motivation required to be accepted into a four-year college, technical program, or entry-level position with one of Rooted's industry partners. Rooted's unique partnerships with regional industry leaders to provide work-based learning experiences along with its personalized learning model will prepare all students for a financially secure life. The following values will guide it toward helping students achieve this vision:

- **Growth**: We push ourselves to grow at all times.
- **Preparation:** We are prepared.
- **Hospitality:** We put people first. We are respectful and appreciative of the people we serve and who serve us.
- **Excellence:** We push the limits of what is possible.

● **Community**: We never forget where we come from.

Rooted believes students are vital and active members of the community. Rooted's school culture emanates from its vision which is expressed in its core values and in its routines that foster those values.

Rooted School is committed to creating and fostering an education system that respects the cultural diversity and inherent cultural wealth of the various communities it serves. Rooted commits to ensuring that all policies, regulations, practices and programs promote understanding and value the diversity of the Indianapolis community.

Rooted further recognizes that culture exerts a powerful influence on teaching and learning and will therefore promote cultural understanding in all aspects of a student's school experience by adopting curriculum, learning activities, and teaching practices that lead to inter-cultural proficiency. As such, teachers and staff will receive training in systemic and personal critical analyses, restorative justice, microaggressions, and culturally-responsive teaching practices. Rooted parents will be educated and informed of practices through Rooted town hall meetings and parent conferences.

Rooted recognizes the value of multicultural education in supporting student success. Multicultural education provides a platform for working with diverse school populations and achieving justice within societies that are marked by inequalities based on language, gender, socioeconomic status, or religion.[10] Rooted will utilize the Anti-Bias Framework developed by the Southern Poverty Law Center and [11] [12] culturally-responsive teaching as a basis for effective anti-bias education at every grade level. The anti-bias anchor standards provide a set of age-appropriate learning outcomes divided into four domains: identity, diversity, justice and action. Our curriculum is inclusive of the histories, cultures and contributions of diverse groups of people; it enriches learning for all students and prepares them to work toward equity by engaging them in critical-thinking around issues of racism, sexism, classism, linguicism, ageism, genderism, and more.

360° Student Supports: Core to our school culture and student discipline model are what we call 360° Student Supports. This describes a wrap-around approach that emphasizes building secure attachments and improving mental health. In order to aid students in achieving their academic and social emotional goals, Rooted focuses on supporting the whole student. Our 360° support team consists of the following teammates who deliver ancillary support services at the school level:

> (a) Special Education Teacher(s)—IEP & 504 Accommodations
> (b) English Language Teachers—ELL Services
> (c) Mental Health Clinician—Social-Emotional Counseling Services
> (d) Core Content Teachers
> (e) A Designated Administrator
>
> ● **Attachment-Based Teaching:** In *Attachment-Based Teaching: Creating a Tribal Classroom*, Louis Cozolino argues that the foundation to all learning relies on attachment, empathy, mindfulness and neuroplasticity. He reminds us that the primitive social instincts are primarily driven by biochemical reactions that are triggered in situations of parenting, mating, and group formation. He goes on to offer strategies meant to activate small group dynamics, promote primitive social instincts, and secure attachment within larger organizations. Suggestions he gives (which Rooted has established and continues to refine) are keeping classroom size as small as possible, promoting democratic discussion of classroom expectations, and encouraging meaningful and emotional participation by parents. Within the context of how we approach teachers' relationships with students and parents, Cozolino's work has provided strategies for creating micro-learning communities within Rooted that are safe holding places where students are accepted for who they are.[13]

- **Restorative Practices:** Inherent in secure attachment work is our focus on the positive long-term impact of healthy relationships in our school. We have chosen a restorative practices model that aligns with that core belief. Whereas traditional discipline focuses on the violation of rules, restorative practices focus on the violation of people and relationships.

  In every classroom, relationships among individuals are either facilitating students' learning or preventing it. Restorative practices are built on the positive relationships that adults foster with students and with each other in schools. When students care about the relationships they have with others, they work to keep those relationships healthy and to repair any damage to them.[14] Anchoring our restorative practices work is the text, *Better than Carrots and Sticks: Restorative*

  Practices for Positive Classroom Management by Dominique Smith, Douglas Fisher, and Nancy Frey. The chart below outlines a general categorization of punitive versus restorative behaviors in schools.

Punitive	Restorative
Rules are violated	Relationships are violated
Guilt is established	Needs and obligations are established
Accountability is defined as punishment	Accountability is defined as effects and repair
Justice desired by victim	Offender, victim, and school all have direct roles in pursuing justice
No opportunity for remorse	Opportunities to express remorse

  When a student makes a mistake or harms a relationship at Rooted, we respond by using one or all of Smith's suggestions: (1) individual conferences to discuss problematic behavior; (2) allow everyone involved in the harm to share their side of the story; and (3) allow harm to be repaired by the one(s) who enacted the harm and the victim(s).

- Advisory Program: We use the Origins Program Developmental Designs Training to onboard our entire team to Rooted's advisory model. Three books that guide our program are *Face to Face Advisories* (provides 190 days of advisory plans that require adaptation and allow for a culturally responsive advisory program), *Developmental Design 1 Resource Book* (this provides the rationale for advisory and is essential for training our teachers), and The Advisory Book (another 190 lessons that also requires adaptation).

- Culture Plan: Building off the principles of *Attachment-Based Teaching* and *Better Than Carrots and Sticks*, we have created a 4-tiered behavior management system. The plan appears in Attachment 5**.**

2.3 High School Graduation Requirements (High Schools Only)

Meets Standard Expectation
- The founding team has developed a sound plan for meeting state and authorizer graduation requirements (including credits, GPA calculation, transcripts, electives) and compelling explanation of any additional

1. Describe the founding team's capacity to design and implement a high school program that meets or exceeds Indiana's graduation requirements and Education One's performance standards. Include relevant team experience supporting students to earn Core 40 diplomas or higher, monitoring on-track status, and increasing graduation rates.

Rooted School Indianapolis's team brings deep experience in designing, implementing, and continuously improving high school programs that meet and exceed Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) graduation requirements while aligning to Education One's performance standards. The team has a demonstrated track record of supporting students, particularly first-generation, historically underserved, and opportunity-gap students, to earn Core 40 diplomas and higher, remain on track to graduate, and successfully transition to postsecondary pathways.

Standards-Aligned Program Design

RSI's academic and developmental framework is intentionally aligned to Indiana's High School Graduation Pathways, including:

- *Core 40 academic requirements, with opportunities for advanced coursework, dual credit, and CTE concentration completion*
- *Employability skills, embedded across advisory, coursework, Work-Based Learning (WBL), and culminating projects*
- *Postsecondary-ready competencies, including college and career exploration, credential attainment, and individualized postsecondary planning*

Each of the three pillars, Knowledge of Self, Community, and Society; Academic Excellence; and Cultivating Unique Gifts and Talents, is vertically aligned across grades 8–12 and mapped to IDOE expectations for academic rigor, career readiness, and graduation pathways. Culminating projects at each grade level function as performance-based demonstrations of learning tied to Indiana standards, RSI's graduate profile, and Education One's emphasis on measurable student outcomes.

Experience Supporting Core 40 and Postsecondary Readiness

The founding team includes leaders, counselors, and instructional designers with direct experience:

- *Supporting students to complete Core 40 and Core 40 with Academic or Technical Honors diplomas*
- *Designing CTE pathways aligned to Indiana College and Career Pathways, including Business Operations & Technology*
- *Implementing SAT/ACT preparation, advanced coursework planning, and AP/dual credit advising*
- *Guiding students through FAFSA completion, scholarship applications, and postsecondary enrollment*

Academic planning begins no later than 8th grade with a 4-Year Graduation Plan, which is reviewed and revised annually in partnership with students, families, advisors, and counselors. This proactive approach ensures early identification of academic gaps, timely intervention, and intentional acceleration opportunities.

Monitoring On-Track Status and Graduation Progress

RSI's founding team has extensive experience implementing systems to monitor and respond to student progress, including:

- *Regular on-track reviews using credit accumulation, attendance, assessment data, and social-emotional indicators*
- *Scheduled transition meetings and check-ins with counselors, advisors, and WBL mentors*
- *Use of advisory structures and small-group mentoring to address barriers before they impact graduation*

Students receive targeted academic support such as Math Lab, ELA Lab, credit recovery, and individualized tutoring, ensuring alignment with IDOE credit requirements while maintaining high expectations. Decision points—such as internships, advanced course enrollment, and postsecondary planning—are intentionally scaffolded to keep students engaged and progressing toward graduation.

Increasing Graduation Rates Through Integrated Supports

The founding team's approach reflects proven strategies for increasing graduation rates, including:

- *Strong adult advocacy, with every student connected to multiple trusted staff members*
- *Integration of social-emotional learning, identity development, and career exploration to increase relevance and persistence*
- *Authentic learning experiences such as civic action projects, internships, leadership opportunities, and capstone presentations*

By embedding academic rigor within culturally responsive instruction and real-world application, RSI's model not only meets Indiana's graduation requirements but also prepares students to graduate with purpose, clarity, and postsecondary momentum.

Alignment with Education One Performance Standards

RSI's program design reflects Education One's emphasis on:

- *Clear outcomes aligned to state standards and graduation requirements*
- *Continuous monitoring of student progress and program effectiveness*
- *Strong postsecondary outcomes, including college enrollment, credential attainment, and career readiness*

The founding team's collective experience, coupled with RSI's intentionally designed pillars and culminating projects, positions the school to consistently meet or exceed IDOE graduation standards while advancing equitable, student-centered outcomes.

2. Explain how the school will ensure that all students graduate on time and are prepared for postsecondary success. Describe how students will earn credits, how progress toward graduation will be tracked, and how your proposed pathways align with Indiana Graduation Pathways, Core 40 diploma requirements, and Postsecondary-Ready Competency options.

Rooted School Indianapolis (RSI) is intentionally designed to ensure that all students graduate on time with a Core 40 diploma or higher and are prepared for meaningful postsecondary success. The school's model integrates rigorous

academics, individualized advising, career-connected learning, and continuous progress monitoring to support each student from entry through graduation.

Credit Attainment and Diploma Completion

Students earn credits through standards-aligned coursework that meets Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) requirements for the Core 40 diploma, with opportunities to pursue Academic Honors or Technical Honors where appropriate. RSI's master schedule, staffing model, and academic supports ensure access to all required credits, including:

- **English/Language Arts (8 credits)**
- **Mathematics (6 credits, including Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II)**
- **Science (6 credits, including Biology I and Chemistry or Physics)**
- **Social Studies (6 credits, including U.S. History, Government, and Economics)**
- **Physical Education and Health**
- **Directed Electives and Career & Technical Education (CTE)**

Credit recovery, Math Lab, ELA Lab, and flexible scheduling options are available to ensure students who experience academic disruptions remain on track without lowering expectations. Students begin high school with a 4-Year Graduation Plan, initiated in 8th grade, which is reviewed and updated annually.

Tracking Progress Toward Graduation

RSI employs a **multi-tiered monitoring system** to ensure students remain on track for graduation:

- **Quarterly credit audits** to verify progress toward Core 40 requirements
- **Ongoing data reviews** of attendance, coursework completion, assessments, and SEL indicators
- **Regular advisor and counselor check-ins**, including transition meetings at key grade levels
- **Individualized interventions** triggered by early warning indicators

Each student is supported by a team that includes an advisor, counselor, content teachers, and, beginning in upper grades, professional mentors and Work-Based Learning (WBL) staff. This team approach ensures timely adjustments to academic plans and targeted support before students fall off track.

Alignment to Indiana Graduation Pathways

RSI's graduation model is fully aligned with Indiana Graduation Pathways, ensuring that every student completes all three required components:

1. High School Diploma (Core 40 or Higher)

All students complete Core 40 coursework, with structured access to advanced academics, dual credit, AP exposure, and CTE concentrator sequences.

2. Postsecondary-Ready Competencies

Students demonstrate postsecondary readiness through multiple, aligned options, including:

- **CTE Pathways and Capstones**, culminating in the Business Operations & Technology Capstone
- **Work-Based Learning experiences**, including internships, job shadowing, and industry mentoring

- **Employability skills development**, embedded across advisory, coursework, and culminating projects
- **SAT/ACT completion**, with school-based preparation and support
- **FAFSA completion and postsecondary planning**, supported through senior seminar and counseling

Grade-level culminating projects—such as civic action projects, presentations of learning, internships, and postsecondary portfolios—serve as performance-based demonstrations of employability and readiness competencies recognized by IDOE.

3. Postsecondary-Ready Demonstration

Students complete at least one state-recognized demonstration of readiness, such as:

- **CTE Concentrator completion**
- **Work-Based Learning hours aligned to IDOE requirements**
- **SAT/ACT benchmarks or other approved assessments**
- **Postsecondary Plan Digital Portfolio and Presentation**, aligned to IDOE employability skill standards

Pathways to Postsecondary Success

RSI offers **multiple, flexible pathways** that align with student interests and Indiana Graduation Pathways, including:

- **College Preparation Pathway**, emphasizing Core 40 with Academic Honors, SAT/ACT readiness, college applications, and FAFSA completion
- **Career and Technical Education Pathway**, including CTE concentrators, industry-aligned coursework, and capstone experiences
- **Work-Based Learning Pathway**, integrating internships, mentorships, and real-world application

Students receive structured support in college and career exploration, financial literacy, and transition planning, ensuring they graduate with a clear and viable postsecondary plan—whether that includes college, credential programs, apprenticeships, or immediate employment.

Continuous Support and Accountability

RSI's advisory model, culturally responsive curriculum, and strong adult advocacy ensure that students remain engaged and supported throughout high school. Decision Day, senior defense presentations, and postsecondary transition meetings reinforce accountability while celebrating achievement.

Through this integrated, data-informed approach, Rooted School Indianapolis ensures that every student graduates on time, meets Indiana's Core 40 and Graduation Pathway requirements, and is prepared to thrive in postsecondary education, careers, and civic life.

3. Describe how the school will implement rigorous and relevant programs of study that support students in earning Indiana Employability and Postsecondary Readiness Seals. Include any plans for dual credit, CTE, internships, work-based learning, or industry certifications. Identify partners that will support these pathways.

Rooted School Indianapolis (RSI) implements rigorous, relevant, and career-connected programs of study designed to ensure that all students graduate with the skills, experiences, and credentials necessary to earn the Indiana

Employability Skills Seal and Postsecondary Readiness Seals, while also meeting Indiana Graduation Pathways and Core 40 diploma requirements.

RSI's approach integrates academic coursework, Career and Technical Education (CTE), dual credit, work-based learning, and comprehensive college and career coaching into a cohesive, multi-year framework that emphasizes relevance, equity, and real-world application.

RSI's programs of study are intentionally structured around three phases—Explore, Engage, and Experience—which align with Indiana's Employability Skills Standards and Postsecondary-Ready Competency expectations.

1. Academic Rigor with Career Relevance

Students complete all Core 40 academic requirements through standards-aligned coursework while engaging in career-connected learning that reinforces relevance and persistence. Coursework integrates:

- Project-based learning tied to real-world challenges
- Performance-based assessments aligned to employability skills
- Advisory curriculum focused on self-awareness, goal setting, and career planning

Academic rigor is reinforced through Math Lab, ELA Lab, SAT/ACT preparation, and individualized tutoring, ensuring students remain on track for both graduation and postsecondary readiness.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Pathways

RSI offers state-approved CTE pathways aligned to high-demand, high-wage career sectors, including the Business Operations & Technology pathway. Students progress through sequenced coursework that culminates in a CTE Concentrator and Capstone, enabling them to earn:

- CTE certifications and credentials
- Postsecondary Readiness competencies recognized by IDOE
- Eligibility for the Postsecondary Readiness Seal

More than 70% of RSI students earn CTE certifications annually, demonstrating strong alignment between instruction, industry expectations, and credential attainment.

Dual Credit and Postsecondary Credit Opportunities

RSI intentionally expands access to dual credit and postsecondary coursework, particularly for first-generation and historically underserved students. Opportunities include:

- Dual credit courses through Ivy Tech Community College
- Online dual enrollment through Indiana University and IU Indianapolis
- Industry-aligned coursework that counts toward both high school and postsecondary credentials

Students are supported by counselors and Student Success Coaches in selecting dual credit options aligned to their individualized academic and career plans.

Work-Based Learning, Internships, and Career Experiences

Work-Based Learning (WBL) is a cornerstone of RSI's programs of study and a primary mechanism for students to demonstrate employability skills. Students participate in:

- Job shadowing and career interviews (middle school and early high school)
- Career immersion experiences, including internships, youth apprenticeships, and paid work experiences (grades 11–12)
- CTE-aligned capstone projects tied to real workplace challenges

These experiences are structured to meet IDOE Work-Based Learning hour requirements and are documented through RSI's college and career readiness platform.

Employability Skills Development and Seals

RSI intentionally embeds Indiana Employability Skills Standards across coursework, advisory, and extracurricular activities. Students demonstrate competencies such as:

- Communication and collaboration
- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Professionalism, work ethic, and citizenship
- Networking and leadership

Students earn credentials such as the Governor's Work Ethic Certificate and complete performance-based demonstrations that qualify them for the Indiana Employability Skills Seal.

College and Postsecondary Readiness

To support the **Postsecondary Readiness Seal**, RSI ensures that students complete:

- SAT/ACT preparation and testing
- FAFSA completion (100% required for seniors)
- College applications, credential programs, or apprenticeship enrollment
- A Postsecondary Plan Digital Portfolio and Presentation

Students also engage in extensive financial literacy programming, including budgeting, scholarship searches, and understanding student aid reports (SAR).

Key Partners Supporting Programs of Study

RSI leverages strong partnerships to ensure high-quality implementation and alignment to industry and postsecondary expectations, including:

- **Center for Leadership Development (CLD)**

    - Self-Discovery & Career Exploration
    - Project MR (young men)
      Precious MISS (young women)
    - Success Prep and college exposure

- **My Readiness Coach**

- ○ Career interest assessments and employability modules
- ○ College and career readiness curriculum
- ○ Ongoing professional development for counselors and teachers

- **Inspire Success**

  - ○ Training and coaching for Student Success Coaches and counselors
  - ○ CTE instructional effectiveness and advisory council development
    Alignment to IDOE's Carrying the Torch to Student Success framework

- **Postsecondary Institutions**

  - ○ Ivy Tech Community College
  - ○ Indiana University (online and Indianapolis campus)

- **Local Employers and Community Organizations**

  - ○ Internship placements
  - ○ Job shadowing and mentorship
  - ○ Advisory councils and career fairs

Continuous Improvement and Program Effectiveness

RSI evaluates program effectiveness using both quantitative and qualitative measures, including:

- Graduation and college acceptance rates
- Credential and certification attainment
- Employability skill assessments and employer feedback
- Student, family, and partner surveys

Career coaching outcomes are measured through SMART goal attainment, skill development rubrics, and postsecondary transition milestones. Regular reviews ensure programs remain aligned to student needs, labor market demands, and state expectations.

Through this integrated, partner-supported model, Rooted School Indianapolis ensures that students engage in rigorous and relevant programs of study, earn Indiana Employability and Postsecondary Readiness Seals, and graduate fully prepared for college, career, and lifelong success.

4. What early warning systems and student support structures will the school use to identify and intervene with students at risk of falling behind, not graduating on time, or not meeting diploma strength expectations? How will these systems support continuous progress across all student groups?

Rooted School Indianapolis (RSI) implements a proactive, data-driven early warning and intervention system designed to identify students at risk of falling behind academically, not graduating on time, or not meeting Core 40 diploma strength and Indiana Graduation Pathway expectations. These systems are embedded within a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) and are designed to promote continuous progress and equitable outcomes for all student groups.

Early Warning Indicators

RSI monitors a comprehensive set of leading and lagging indicators that research shows are predictive of graduation and postsecondary success. Indicators are reviewed regularly and include:

- **Attendance** (chronic absenteeism thresholds and trends)
- **Course performance** (grades, credit accumulation, failed or at-risk courses)
- **Assessment data** (formative, benchmark, SAT/ACT readiness indicators)
- **Behavior and engagement** (discipline referrals, advisory participation, SEL indicators)
- **On-track status** toward Core 40, diploma strength, and Graduation Pathways
  Postsecondary readiness milestones (CTE progress, WBL hours, FAFSA completion, credential attainment)

Data is disaggregated by student subgroup to ensure equitable monitoring and responsiveness.

RSI uses **frequent, structured data reviews** to identify risk early and respond quickly:

- **Weekly attendance and engagement checks** by advisors and Student Success Coaches
- **Bi-weekly progress monitoring** of coursework and employability skills
- **Quarterly credit audits** aligned to Core 40 and Graduation Pathways
- **Scheduled transition reviews** at key grade levels (8→9, 9→10, 10→11, 11→12)

These reviews are supported by RSI's college and career readiness platform, which tracks academic plans, career milestones, and postsecondary readiness indicators in real time.

Tiered Intervention and Student Support Structures

RSI's MTSS framework ensures that supports are matched to student need and scaled appropriately:

Tier 1 – Universal Supports (All Students)

- Advisory curriculum focused on goal-setting, organization, and self-advocacy
- Culturally responsive instruction aligned to student identity and relevance
- College and career exploration embedded across grade levels
- Universal SAT/ACT preparation and financial literacy programming

Tier 2 – Targeted Supports (Some Students)

- Small-group tutoring through Math Lab and ELA Lab
- Targeted mentoring and check-ins with Student Success Coaches
- Attendance improvement plans and family outreach
- Academic skill-building workshops and SEL supports

Tier 3 – Intensive Supports (Individualized)

- Individual graduation plans and credit recovery options
- One-on-one counseling and case management
- Adjusted schedules, extended learning time, or alternative pathways
- Coordinated support with families and external partners

Each student receiving Tier 2 or Tier 3 support has a documented intervention plan with clear goals, timelines, and progress checkpoints.

Every student at RSI is supported by a team of adults, including:

- An advisor who monitors daily engagement and well-being
- A counselor who oversees academic planning and graduation progress
- A Student Success Coach who supports career readiness and postsecondary planning
- Content teachers and, in upper grades, Work-Based Learning mentors

This distributed ownership ensures no student "falls through the cracks" and that concerns are addressed from multiple perspectives.

RSI's early warning and support systems are intentionally designed to promote equity across all student groups. The school:

- Disaggregates data by race, income, disability status, English learner status, and first-generation status
- Uses culturally responsive practices to address barriers to engagement and access
- Engages families as partners through regular communication and workshops
- Reviews intervention effectiveness and adjusts supports based on outcomes

Leadership teams conduct regular program evaluations to assess the effectiveness of interventions and refine practices to better support student success.

Through these integrated early warning systems and support structures, RSI ensures that students are:

- Identified early when risk emerges
- Supported through timely, targeted interventions
- Continuously monitored toward Core 40 completion and diploma strength
- Prepared to graduate on time with clear, viable postsecondary plans

This comprehensive, equity-centered approach enables Rooted School Indianapolis to sustain high graduation rates and ensure that all students, across all subgroups, progress successfully toward graduation and postsecondary success.

2.4 Outcomes

Meets Standard Expectation
- Goals are clear, rigorous, and relevant, and include indicators of performance for all students, including subgroups.
- Goals are aligned with the school's mission.
- Measures are aligned with the goals.
- The founding team has a clear plan for establishing goals and using data to track progress and inform practice.

1. In addition to all mandatory state assessments, identify the primary interim assessments the school will use to assess student learning needs and progress throughout the year. Explain how these interim assessments align with the school's model, curriculum, performance goals, and state standards.

At Rooted, assessments are used to assess student achievement in meeting academic standards and to assess the need for increased school support for individual students to reach standards. Rooted's graduation requirements and badge outcomes prepare students for both college and a career in the tech industry and to meet Indiana Graduation Pathway requirements. To ensure students are on track to meet these requirements, Rooted will use a combination of diagnostic assessments, teacher-created badge assessments, and external interim assessments. Assessments will be used to determine the success of our students, teachers and the overall program of studies. Teachers, in tandem with their academic coaches, will set goals and monitor the progress of these goals over the course of the semester.

Rooted students will participate in all state-mandated standardized assessments as well as industry certification assessments aligned to the course of study Rooted will also keep abreast with changes to state standards and diploma requirements and will make adjustments to curriculum and assessments as appropriate.

Assessment Framework

Rooted School Indianapolis operates on a standards-based mastery academic model that is data-driven and designed to ensure every student is prepared for the high-wage, high-demand careers of the future. Our assessment framework is built on the pillars of consistency, coherence, and targeted intervention. By utilizing a mix of foundational growth monitors, state-aligned benchmarks, and industry-recognized certifications, we provide a transparent pathway for students to track their own progress toward college and career readiness.

Comprehensive Assessment & Progress Monitoring Matrix

Category	Assessment Tool	Student Population	Frequency & Timing	Purpose & Academic Alignment
Middle School Growth	I-LEARN Checkpoints & Summative	Grades 7-8	Checkpoints 1-3 (Benchmarks) Summative in April	Replaces NWEA; monitors progress toward state standards and foundational proficiency.
High School Benchmarks	PSAT / SAT	Grades 9-11	Fall & Spring (Official); ongoing digital practice	Measures growth in Math and ELA; practice tests are conducted digitally on CollegeBoard.
College Readiness	ACT	Grade 12	Annual	Final summative assessment used for college applications and state accountability.
Career Exploration	ASVAB CEP	Grades 10-12	Annual	Evaluates skills and facilitates academic planning for college and career pathways.
Standards Mastery	Pear Assessment	Grades 7-12	Ongoing (Unit-based)	The common platform used to measure mastery of state, national, and Rooted standards.

Skill Intervention	IXL Diagnostic	Grades 7-12	Weekly usage; Quarterly Diagnostics	Personalized skill plans aligned to test prep; tracks real-time growth in ELA and Math.
State Content Mastery	Algebra I, Geometry, Biology, US History EOC	Course- specific	May (End of Course)	Validates mastery of core content; students aim for a "Good" or better rating.
Civic Proficiency	Naturalization Exam	Grade 12 (Gov)	Once per course	Required for graduation; students must score at least 60% (12/20 correct).
Industry Validation	Credentials: Northstar, CompTIA, ServSafe	Grades 9-12	1 per semester (course dependent)	Quality assurance of industry-approved mastery for tech and career readiness.

Systems for Continuous Improvement

I. **Data Analysis Cycles:** To maintain instructional coherence and responsiveness, Rooted School employs a rigorous review schedule:
   - **Weekly PLCs:** Faculty teams collaborate to align daily instruction with recent Pear Assessment and IXL data.
   - **Weekly Coaching:** Coaches and staff meet to norm on intervention strategies for students falling below established performance bands.
   - **Bi-Weekly Data Meetings:** School leadership analyzes broader trends to identify achievement gaps and adjust school-wide resource allocation.

II. **Support for Special Populations:** We prioritize equitable access to all assessment measures to ensure every student can demonstrate mastery:
   - **Accommodations:** Digital platforms including IXL, Pear Assessment, and state portals allow for pre-inputted accommodations (e.g., extended time, text-to-speech) to meet individual student needs.
   - **ELL Support:** English Language Learners receive additional quantitative and qualitative monitoring through MobyMax and the yearly WIDA assessment to track language acquisition progress alongside academic growth.

III. **Intervention Protocols:** When assessment data indicates a student is "off track" (e.g., scoring <79% on an EOC benchmark or falling below Lexile growth targets), mandatory interventions are triggered:
   - **Targeted Support:** Students participate in daily small-group, 1:1 intervention, and/or tutoring in English, Math, or Reading.
   - **Mastery Pacing:** Students off-track in core content areas are required to attend winter and spring intersessions and/or summer school for targeted support and remediation.

2. Explain how the school will measure and evaluate academic progress – of individual students, student cohorts, special populations, and the school as a whole – throughout the school year.

Rooted School Indianapolis (RSI) uses a comprehensive, real-time Student On-Track/Off-Track monitoring system to evaluate academic progress for individual students, cohorts, special populations, and the school as a whole. This system allows staff to identify risks early, intervene strategically, and ensure continuous progress toward promotion, graduation, and diploma strength expectations.

Individual Student Progress Monitoring

Each student has an individualized on-track profile that is reviewed quarterly and at key instructional checkpoints. The Student On-Track/Off-Track tracker captures critical indicators, including:

- **Credit accumulation** (total credits earned, courses needed for promotion)
- **Promotion readiness** (on-track status in Q1, Q2, Q3, and end of year)
- **Course performance** (repeaters, failed courses, credit recovery needs)
- **Testing status** (BOY testing completion and benchmark attainment)
- **Attendance-related interventions** (winter school, summer school, extended learning)
- **Graduation pathway readiness** (Service Learning Hours status and needs)

Advisors, counselors, and Student Success Coaches use this data to hold regular check-ins, update intervention plans, and ensure students remain on track for promotion and graduation.

Early Identification and Intervention

The system is intentionally designed to flag risk before failure occurs. Indicators such as:

- "Not on track for promotion" in Q1 or Q2
- Credit deficits or course repetition
- BOY testing status marked "Not Met"
- SSLH status listed as "Not Met"

Automatically trigger tiered interventions, including:

- Targeted tutoring (Math Lab, ELA Lab)
- Credit recovery (S1 and S2)
- Winter or summer school placement
- One-on-one academic counseling
- Family communication and engagement

Interventions are logged directly in the tracker, allowing staff to evaluate intervention effectiveness over time.

Cohort-Level Monitoring (Grade-Level Analysis)

RSI aggregates individual data to evaluate progress across student cohorts, particularly critical transition years such as 9th grade. Cohort-level metrics include:

- Percentage of students on track for promotion each quarter
- Average credits earned per grade level
- Percentage of repeaters or students requiring credit recovery
- Testing completion and proficiency trends
- Winter and summer school participation rates

This allows leadership teams to identify systemic gaps, adjust instructional strategies, and allocate resources where they are most needed.

Monitoring Special Populations (IEP, 504, MLL)

The tracker includes identifiers for IEP, 504, and Multilingual Learners, enabling RSI to disaggregate data and monitor equity of outcomes. For special populations, RSI evaluates:

- Credit accumulation and promotion rates compared to peers
- Course pass rates and GPA trends
- Growth on benchmark and state assessments
- Responsiveness to interventions and accommodations

Special education staff, counselors, and instructional leaders collaborate to ensure students receive appropriate supports without lowering expectations, and progress is reviewed during regular MTSS and case management meetings.

Schoolwide Progress and Accountability

At the school level, RSI uses aggregated tracker data to evaluate overall academic health and alignment to goals. Schoolwide metrics include:

- Percentage of students on track for promotion by quarter
- Credit recovery utilization and success rates
- Promotion and retention rates
- Graduation pathway readiness indicators (SSLH, testing, credits)
- Intervention participation and outcomes

Leadership teams review this data during monthly and quarterly data cycles to guide professional development, scheduling decisions, and continuous improvement efforts.

Continuous Review and Adjustment

RSI's measurement system is iterative and responsive. Data is not only collected but actively used to:

- Adjust student schedules and supports mid-year
- Refine intervention strategies
- Improve instructional practices
- Strengthen advisory and student support systems

End-of-year outcomes are used to inform program evaluation and planning for the following school year, ensuring that lessons learned directly impact future practice.

Through its Student On-Track/Off-Track monitoring system, RSI ensures that academic progress is continuously measured, clearly documented, and strategically addressed at every level. By combining real-time data, structured review cycles, and relationship-based interventions, RSI is able to support individual student success, close equity gaps for special populations, and drive schoolwide improvement toward on-time graduation and postsecondary readiness.

3. *Outline the proposed school's student outcome goals. Explain the rationale for these goals and targets. Include any mission-specific student outcomes you seek to achieve.*

Rooted School Indianapolis's student outcome goals are grounded in the school's mission to ensure that every student graduates on time with strong academic preparation, employability skills, and a clear postsecondary plan. Using the school scorecard as a monitoring tool, the school establishes outcome goals that focus on student growth, achievement, engagement, and readiness across all grade levels. Rather than relying on a single measure of success, RSI evaluates progress through a balanced set of academic, behavioral, and postsecondary indicators that reflect the whole child and the full scope of college and career readiness.

Academically, the school's outcome goals emphasize continuous growth and mastery over time. Progress in literacy and mathematics is monitored through benchmark and state assessments to ensure students are developing the foundational skills needed for success in Core 40 coursework and beyond. Course performance, GPA trends, and pass rates are used to evaluate sustained academic achievement and identify students who may need additional support. These measures allow the school to focus not only on proficiency, but also on accelerated growth for students who enter below grade level, reinforcing the school's commitment to closing opportunity gaps.

A central outcome goal for RSI is ensuring that students remain on track for promotion, graduation, and diploma strength. The scorecard tracks indicators such as credit accumulation, attendance, and ninth-grade on-track status because early success in high school is a strong predictor of on-time graduation. By closely monitoring these indicators throughout the year, the school can intervene early, provide targeted supports, and maintain high expectations for all students. Graduation-focused metrics, including FAFSA completion, participation in work-based learning, and credential attainment, ensure that students are not only earning diplomas but are also prepared to transition successfully to postsecondary education or careers.

RSI's outcome goals also prioritize postsecondary readiness and employability. Students are expected to engage in career exploration, work-based learning, and credential-bearing experiences that align with Indiana Graduation Pathways. Performance on college entrance exams, completion of career and technical education experiences, and demonstration of employability skills are used to assess readiness for life after high school. These goals reflect the school's belief that preparation for college, career, and civic life must be intentional, relevant, and embedded throughout the student experience.

Equity is a core driver of RSI's outcome goals. The school uses scorecard data to monitor outcomes for student cohorts and special populations, including students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and other historically underserved groups. Growth, achievement, attendance, and graduation indicators are reviewed to ensure that all student groups are making continuous progress and that supports are adjusted when disparities emerge. This approach reinforces the school's mission to provide access, opportunity, and high-quality outcomes for every student.

Finally, RSI's mission-specific outcomes extend beyond academic performance. The school seeks to graduate students who have a strong sense of identity, purpose, and belonging; who demonstrate leadership, responsibility, and professionalism; and who are equipped to contribute positively to their communities. By combining rigorous academics, strong student support, and real-world learning experiences, RSI's student outcome goals reflect a holistic vision of success that prepares students to thrive in college, career, and life.

The proposed student outcome goals were intentionally chosen to reflect both Rooted School Indianapolis's mission and the expectations of the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) accountability system. RSI's mission centers on ensuring that all students graduate on time with strong academic preparation, employability skills, and a clear postsecondary plan. As a result, the school's outcome goals focus on growth, achievement, engagement, and readiness—key indicators that demonstrate whether students are prepared for success beyond high school.

The academic measures included in the school scorecard align directly to IDOE's emphasis on student growth and proficiency in English/language arts, mathematics, and science. By monitoring growth through benchmark and state assessments, as well as course performance and GPA, RSI ensures that students are mastering state standards while also making meaningful progress over time. This reflects the school's belief that academic excellence is both a requirement of the accountability system and a necessary foundation for college and career success.

Graduation-focused indicators were selected because IDOE places significant weight on on-time graduation, credit completion, and diploma strength. Metrics such as ninth-grade on-track status, credit accumulation, attendance, and promotion rates are included because they are early predictors of graduation outcomes and are commonly used within Indiana's accountability framework. These measures allow RSI to intervene early, maintain high expectations, and

ensure that students are progressing toward a Core 40 diploma and Indiana Graduation Pathway completion.

Postsecondary readiness measures were chosen to align with IDOE's Graduation Pathways and Employability Skills standards. Indicators related to FAFSA completion, work-based learning participation, credential attainment, and college entrance exam readiness reflect the state's requirement that students demonstrate readiness beyond credit completion alone. These outcomes also reinforce RSI's mission to prepare students for meaningful postsecondary opportunities, whether through college, credential programs, apprenticeships, or immediate employment.

Equity-focused measures were embedded because both RSI's mission and IDOE's accountability system emphasize closing achievement gaps and improving outcomes for all student groups. By disaggregating data for special populations and monitoring growth, achievement, and graduation indicators, RSI ensures that accountability is applied equitably and that supports are responsive to student needs.

Overall, the school's outcome goals represent a deliberate alignment between mission and accountability. They were selected to meet IDOE requirements while also advancing RSI's broader vision of student success—one that values academic rigor, continuous growth, postsecondary readiness, and the development of confident, capable graduates prepared to contribute to their communities.

4. *Describe how internal and external stakeholders, including the public, will know the extent to which the school is achieving its mission.*

Rooted School Indianapolis ensures transparency and accountability by regularly sharing progress toward its mission with both internal and external stakeholders through multiple, accessible communication channels. These structures are intentionally designed so that families, staff, community partners, and the broader public understand how well the school is advancing its mission and where continuous improvement efforts are focused.

At the governance level, the Board of Directors plays a central role in monitoring mission progress. Board meetings are held regularly and include updates on academic performance, student growth, graduation indicators, and postsecondary readiness aligned to the school scorecard. These meetings provide an opportunity for school leadership to present data, reflect on progress toward mission-driven goals, and discuss strategies for improvement. Board materials and summaries serve as a public record of accountability and demonstrate how decisions are grounded in student outcomes and mission alignment.

RSI also engages families and community members through town halls, which create open forums for sharing schoolwide progress and listening to stakeholder feedback. During town halls, leadership highlights key indicators such as student engagement, academic growth, graduation readiness, and career-connected learning experiences. These sessions allow stakeholders to ask questions, better understand the school's performance, and contribute ideas that inform ongoing school improvement.

The Family Leadership Council is a key mechanism for deep, two-way engagement with families. Through regular meetings, families receive clear updates on student outcomes, school initiatives, and progress toward the mission. Council members provide feedback on programs, policies, and supports, ensuring that family voice informs decision-making. This structure reinforces trust and shared ownership of student success.

In addition, RSI uses consistent communication tools such as newsletters and parent meetings to keep families informed throughout the year. Newsletters share updates on academic milestones, student achievements, postsecondary planning, and upcoming opportunities, while parent meetings provide more detailed discussions about student progress, expectations, and available support. These communications help families understand how daily instructional practices and student supports connect to the school's broader mission.

Collectively, these internal and external communication structures ensure that progress toward the school's mission is visible, understandable, and actionable. By combining formal governance reporting with ongoing family and community engagement, Rooted School Indianapolis creates a culture of transparency, accountability, and partnership that allows stakeholders to clearly see the extent to which the school is fulfilling its mission.

5. Describe the corrective actions the school will take if student academic achievement falls short of expectations and goals at the school-wide, classroom, or individual student level.

Corrective Actions for Academic Underperformance

The school employs a continuous improvement framework to monitor academic performance and respond promptly when student achievement falls short of established expectations at the school-wide, classroom, or individual student level. Data from multiple measures, including interim assessments, competency-based progress tracking, project rubrics, and formative assessments, are reviewed regularly to identify trends and gaps.

School-Wide Level:
If school-wide academic performance does not meet benchmarks, leadership will initiate a comprehensive data review to identify root causes related to curriculum alignment, instructional practices, or implementation fidelity. Corrective actions may include revising curriculum pacing or scope and sequence, increasing instructional coaching and professional development, reallocating resources to priority areas, and adjusting the school schedule to increase instructional time or intervention blocks. Progress toward improvement targets is monitored through shortened data cycles, with leadership reporting regularly to the governing board.

Classroom Level:
When classroom-level data indicates underperformance, school leaders and instructional coaches will conduct targeted observations, review lesson plans and student work, and engage teachers in coaching cycles focused on specific instructional strategies. Corrective actions include differentiated professional development, co-planning support, model lessons, and increased feedback frequency. Teachers are supported in adjusting instructional strategies, assessment practices, and student grouping to better meet learner needs.

Individual Student Level:
For individual students who are not meeting academic expectations, the school implements tiered interventions aligned to its competency-based model. These interventions may include small-group instruction, personalized learning plans, targeted skill remediation, tutoring, and increased progress monitoring. Families are engaged as partners in intervention planning, and students receive regular feedback and goal-setting support. Interventions are adjusted based on ongoing data to ensure timely acceleration toward mastery.

Across all levels, corrective actions are grounded in data, implemented with urgency, and evaluated for effectiveness. This systematic approach ensures that academic challenges are addressed early and that all students receive the support necessary to achieve high academic standards.

2.5 Addressing Community Needs, Challenges, and Opportunities

Meets Standard Expectation
- The founding team presents an evidence-based assessment of the challenges and opportunities this school is acting on and articulates how the proposed school addresses an unmet need in the target community.
- Current student and parent demand suggests that the proposed school will meet projected enrollment targets for Year 1 through full enrollment.

1. Detail how the current options available to families do not meet the expressed needs of the community (academic, programmatic, access, demographic, other).

When Rooted opened in 2020, families in the community had school options, but those options were not consistently meeting the academic, programmatic, and access needs that families expressed—particularly for students experiencing poverty and limited access to postsecondary opportunity. Many students were entering secondary grades off track in literacy, math, attendance, and credit accumulation, which limited their ability to access rigorous coursework and graduate prepared for college and career. Families also shared concerns about school environments that lacked consistent structure, strong adult relationships, and clear expectations across classrooms, resulting in disengagement and instability for students.

In addition, existing high school options did not consistently provide a clear, coherent pathway that connected academics to real-world outcomes such as credentials, employment, and long-term economic mobility. Families wanted a school model that combined high expectations, strong student supports, and intentional preparation for both college and career. Rooted was launched in 2020 to meet these needs by creating a grades 9–12 school designed to provide a stable, high-support environment with a clear mission: ensuring students graduate with both a college acceptance letter and a job offer. Rooted's model was built to address gaps in academic preparation, attendance and engagement, and postsecondary readiness that were not being consistently solved by existing options available to families at that time.

2. Describe how the school will meet an unmet need among the target community and students.

Rooted School exists in the heart of the Arlington Woods/Eastside Indianapolis community , a neighborhood with high poverty rates and limited access to high-quality secondary options within walking or short travel distance. Before Rooted, families often had to send teens across the city for school, which posed transportation and time barriers. Rooted fills this geographic and access gap by being right in the neighborhood. Being situated on the Eastern Star Church campus, part of The ROCK Initiative's broader community revitalization efforts, Rooted anchors education alongside community services that neighbors already use, such as housing support and youth programs.

Rooted's mission is explicitly tied to closing the financial wealth gap. It does this by offering a **curriculum model focused on:

- Work-based learning opportunities with local companies
- Industry-recognized certifications
- Partnerships with higher education (like dual credit)
- A promise that students will graduate with both a job offer and a college acceptance if they fulfill requirements**.

This approach is distinct from many traditional high schools that focus mainly on academic credit and state testing. Rooted integrates career readiness and real pathways to jobs as part of the core model, directly responding to community feedback that schools should prepare students for economic participation and upward mobility — not just test scores.

Rooted's model emphasizes personalized pathways, often with a lower student-teacher ratio than many public schools (e.g., 9:1 vs. higher statewide averages).This supports deeper relationships between students and adults and helps address long-standing concerns in underserved neighborhoods that students are "lost in the crowd" or not seen as individuals , a common challenge in larger district schools.

Rooted operates as a tuition-free, open-enrollment public charter school. There are no academic prerequisites or entrance tests to apply, and all students who apply are entered into a lottery if seats are limited

Additionally, because the school qualifies for the CEP program, all students receive free breakfast and lunch each day. This removes food insecurity barriers that disproportionately affect low-income students and ensures that nutrition is not a barrier to learning.

Rooted partners with local businesses and postsecondary institutions, such as Ivy Tech Community College, to provide industry exposure, dual credit, and credentialing opportunities. This direct linkage to local employers (especially in fields like technology) extends learning beyond the classroom and connects students to networks and *opportunities historically inaccessible to many in the Arlington Woods community.*

3. Explain how the evidence of community demand, included in the attachment section, supports the school's ability to meet its proposed enrollment.

Indianapolis is uniquely positioned to find a solution because it is at the heart of this national crisis. According to the POLIS Center at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, the city has a general poverty rate of 22 percent and a child poverty rate of 33 percent, both well above national averages and disproportionately affecting people of color. From 2005 to 2013, the Annie E. Casey Foundation reported that Indianapolis saw a 41 percent increase in the percentage of children living in poverty; only four cities had larger increases: Seattle, Phoenix, Jacksonville, and Las Vegas. All of these numbers underscore that millions of children nationally, and thousands locally, are living in families who are barely surviving financially which can affect their well-being and their ability to succeed as adults.

Few neighborhoods feel this more palpably in Indianapolis than the far eastside which has become a cradle of the city's poverty crisis. People of color make up 75 percent of the neighborhood's residents; it maintains a 29 percent poverty rate and a 14 percent unemployment rate. If a quality education is the potential bridge to higher-paying jobs and financial security, the far eastside will remain in disrepair. In Marion County, 43 percent of all students attend A and B rated schools compared with the far east side's 12 percent

Rooted High School currently serves students from approximately 22 different middle schools. Of these students more than half of them read below grade level and are less than 5% on track to being college ready. In addition, over 75% of students have not had any previous exposure to tech or computer science courses. In order to fulfill the mission for students to be academically prepared for college and/or career, it is imperative to be able to support students proactively in their academic matriculation instead of working to pull students from behind. Rooted expanded to include 7th and 8th grade will allow us to address learning and skills gaps earlier which could provide us the opportunity to accelerate students through high school

This section evaluates the founding team's ability to carry out a detailed and realistic plan to launch and sustain a high-quality public charter school. Successful applicants will demonstrate that they have established the systems, structures, and governance necessary to operate effectively and responsibly. Reviewers will look for evidence of a sound organizational framework, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, strong governance practices, and thoughtful planning across critical operational areas such as facilities, student recruitment, transportation, and finance.

The applicant must also show that the school is positioned to meet legal obligations, respond to unforeseen challenges, and maintain long-term fiscal and operational sustainability while advancing its stated goals for students and families. The strength and viability of execution plans are a key indicator of the school's readiness to open and thrive.

3.1 Organizational Systems

Meets Standard Expectation
- The school's organizational design supports the fulfillment of the commitments and responsibilities of a public school, implementation of the key design elements, oversight of school finances, and achievement of the school's mission.
- Governance structures and systems ensure that the board meets its governance and fiduciary responsibilities while avoiding infringement on management's prerogatives and obligations.

1. Describe the proposed school's organizational structure. Include the rationale and any research basis for this structure. Describe how the organizational structure will support the school's governance plan.

The Rooted School Indianapolis Board of Directors holds full legal and fiduciary authority over Rooted School Indianapolis.The Board is the ultimate governing body responsible for oversight of the school's mission, strategic direction, financial stewardship, executive leadership, and compliance with all applicable laws and charter requirements. All major organizational decisions, policies, and accountability structures flow through and are subject to the authority of the Rooted School Indianapolis Board of Directors.No external organization exercises governance authority over Rooted School Indianapolis.

While Rooted School Indianapolis operates under the sole governance of its Board of Directors, it collaborates closely with other Rooted organizations as strategic partners.

These partnerships are grounded in:

- **Thought Partnership** — Engaging in shared learning, strategic dialogue, and collaborative problem-solving to strengthen implementation and impact.

- **Research & Development** — Studying instructional models, operational practices, and student outcomes across Rooted communities to refine and improve the work.

- **Innovation & Continuous Improvement** — Leveraging collective insight to move the Rooted model forward in ways that benefit students locally and nationally.

These relationships are collaborative rather than supervisory. Other Rooted organizations serve as partners in innovation and learning, not governing bodies. Governance authority remains exclusively with the Rooted School Indianapolis Board of Directors.

The BOD will expand and develop over time through recruitment of new board members after assessing the needs of the current board during an annual board retreat. After authorization and the Founding Board's transition to the Governing Board, the BOD will continue to select directors based on a commitment to support, maintain and uphold its mission and vision and to take on the governance responsibilities of a charter school board member accountable to the public.

As it creates policies, the BOD will consider external factors such as legal requirements (including those stipulated by the charter contract and state law), as well as the organization's vision, mission and current strategic plan. The BOD will ensure that all policies are aligned to the organization's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, and that all stakeholders are able to inform the impact of proposed policies.

The BOD will meet monthly and all policies and decisions will be subject to public meetings with consent agendas approved in advance, documents for discussion issued one week prior to any BOD meeting and public comments and board management discussions held at every meeting.

The BOD will operate by Robert's Rules of Order to ensure streamlined, informed decision-making for the school.

Board Training and Development

Continuous Board Training

Continuous training for the BOD will happen both formally and informally. Formally, each year at a board retreat, the same outsourced training partner mentioned above may be re-engaged to provide both a refresher course as well as advanced courses and training as our local board evolves through various life cycle stages (i.e. planning, launch, start-up, iterate, sustain, and scale). Informally, Rooted School's CEO will meet individually with each board member between board meetings so that every board member has one-on-one interaction at least quarterly. In addition to relationship building, this is an opportunity for board members to dig deeper into a particular area of interest (e.g. school finance, performance assessment, HR recruitment, community engagement, school discipline statistics, governance).

2. Describe how the board will be organized to manage and provide strategic direction for the proposed school, including any board committees.

The board is organized to provide strong oversight, strategic direction, and accountability for the proposed school through a clear governance structure and standing committees aligned to the school's academic, operational, and financial priorities. The board operates as the school's governing authority and will be responsible for ensuring the school fulfills its mission, meets performance expectations, and remains compliant with all legal, financial, and authorizer requirements. The board meets regularly and maintains a clear distinction between governance responsibilities and day-to-day school operations, which will remain the responsibility of school leadership.

As the school grows, the board will intentionally expand its membership to ensure it has the expertise and capacity needed to effectively govern a high-performing charter school. The board will recruit additional members with backgrounds in fundraising. This planned expansion will strengthen the board's ability to provide informed oversight, reduce risk, and support long-term sustainability.

To ensure effective governance and distribute responsibilities, the board has the established standing committees that report to the full board and support deeper review of key priorities. These committees will include:

Governance Committee: Responsible for board recruitment, onboarding, training, policy oversight, board evaluation, and ensuring the board operates in alignment with legal and ethical requirements. This committee will also support succession planning and ensure board members maintain strong accountability practices.

Finance Committee: Responsible for oversight of budgeting, financial reporting, audits, internal controls, cash flow monitoring, and long-term financial planning. The Finance Committee will work closely with school leadership and any contracted financial services provider to ensure the school remains financially sound and compliant with all reporting requirements.

Academic Committee: Responsible for monitoring academic performance, school culture indicators, student supports, and progress toward the school's accountability goals. This committee will review assessment data, attendance and discipline trends, instructional priorities, and progress on school improvement initiatives to ensure the school is on track to meet authorizer expectations.

Through this structure, the board continues to maintain strong oversight while supporting the school's continuous improvement. The committee system will allow for deeper analysis, consistent monitoring, and more strategic decision-making, ensuring the board is well-positioned to guide the school's success over time.

3.2 Plan of Execution

Meets Standard Expectation
- The founding team understands the necessary steps and timeline to effectively launch a new school and is making sufficient progress toward the start-up. The school's core components are well-planned-for: education program, facility, transportation, enrollment, staffing, governance, etc.
- The founding team effectively plans for a sustainable organization with measurable benchmarks to assess progress and adjust course as needed.

1. Discuss the key milestones achieved to date and the key milestones that must be achieved to successfully launch this school.

The school has already successfully launched and is fully operational, marking a significant milestone in advancing its mission. Since opening, Rooted has established core academic programming, student supports, staffing structures, and governance systems necessary for a high-quality learning environment. Key milestones achieved include hiring and onboarding qualified instructional and operations staff, implementing aligned curriculum and assessment systems, establishing a positive school culture grounded in clear expectations, enrolling and retaining students from the target community, and putting in place financial, compliance, and reporting systems required by the authorizer. With the school launched, the remaining milestones focus on sustaining and strengthening implementation, continuing to improve academic outcomes, refining student support systems, deepening family engagement, maintaining financial stability, and scaling systems as enrollment grows to ensure long-term success and fidelity to the school's mission.

Rooted School Indy has demonstrated a consistent ability to drive academic growth within a high-need demographic (100% Free and Reduced Lunch) through a mastery-based hybrid learning model grounded in personalized instruction, data-driven grouping, and high-dosage tutoring. Our instructional design is intentionally structured around skills rather than grade level, allowing students to progress based on demonstrated mastery and targeted intervention needs. At the core of this model is our Learning Acceleration Block (LAB), which uses individualized diagnostic data from IXL, Pear Assessment, and interim benchmarks to group students flexibly across skill bands. Students engage in a hybrid rotation of:
- Targeted direct instruction
- Small-group skill remediation or enrichment
- Personalized adaptive practice through IXL
- High-dosage tutoring for students performing furthest from grade-level expectations

This structure has been particularly impactful in literacy, where we implemented a strategic emphasis on foundational reading skills, comprehension, and academic language development across content areas. Our strategic focus on literacy has yielded exponential growth in ELA proficiency, significantly outpacing initial benchmarks:
- Three-Year ELA Surge: Middle school ELA proficiency increased from 6.3% in 2023 to 25.6% in 2025, representing a four-fold increase in just two years.
- GPA Performance: High school students maintaining a GPA above 2.5 rose from 40% to 58.3% between 2024 and 2025.
- SAT/PSAT Benchmarks: The percentage of 11th-grade students meeting the SAT Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (ERW) benchmark grew from 8% in 2023 to 22% in 2025, nearly tripling college-readiness indicators.

These gains are directly attributable to our hybrid literacy model, which combines:
- Explicit instruction in reading and writing standards
- Daily small-group intervention aligned to diagnostic gaps

- Personalized IXL skill pathways
- Required participation in Winter and Spring Intersessions and Indy Summer Learning Lab (ISLL) for students not yet demonstrating mastery.

Intersession programs and ISLL have been critical accelerators, as students receive extended instructional time focused on decoding, comprehension, and writing skills, allowing them to enter the fall semester with reduced learning gaps. Longitudinal internal data shows that students who attended ISLL demonstrated stronger ELA growth trajectories than peers who did not, particularly among multilingual learners.

A core milestone of our execution plan is the successful integration and support of English Language Learners (ELL) through scaffolding and personalized instructional services embedded within the LAB model.

- ELL Breakthrough: In 2025, the ELL subgroup achieved 40% proficiency in ELA, exceeding the overall school proficiency rate of 25.6%.
- ELL Math Inclusion: ELL students also reached 12.5% proficiency in math, matching the schoolwide average.

These outcomes reflect intentional instructional strategies including:

- Skill-based grouping rather than grade-level placement
- Language scaffolds embedded in small-group instruction
- Targeted tutoring aligned to both literacy and content standards
- Increased instructional minutes through summer ISLL participation

Our execution plan relies on a sophisticated interim assessment strategy utilizing IXL Diagnostics, Pear Assessment, and PSAT/SAT practice to ensure alignment with Indiana state standards and real-time instructional adjustment.

- Recovering Math Growth: After a decline to 5.8% proficiency in 2024, math outcomes rebounded in 2025 to 12.5%, the highest level in our current dataset.

The success observed in ELA directly informed adjustments to math instruction. Specifically, we shifted math programming to more closely mirror our literacy model by:

- Increasing small-group, skill-based instruction
- Expanding high-dosage tutoring blocks
- Using IXL diagnostics to assign personalized math pathways
- Prioritizing foundational numeracy and problem-solving skills rather than pacing through grade-level content prematurely

This instructional redesign reflects our commitment to continuous improvement based on demonstrated success in ELA.

2. Describe the marketing, outreach, and student recruitment strategies the school will employ in the pre-opening year and once operational, to reach proposed enrollment targets.

Rooted has already launched and is currently operational; therefore, its marketing, outreach, and student recruitment strategies are now focused on enrollment growth, retention, and long-term sustainability rather than pre-opening recruitment. Since launch, Rooted has built community awareness through relationship-based outreach, direct engagement with families, and partnerships with local organizations. To strengthen and scale these efforts, Rootedl hired a full-time enrollment staff member this year to lead recruitment strategy, manage enrollment systems, and ensure consistent follow-up with prospective families.

With dedicated staffing in place, the school's current recruitment approach centers on increasing visibility, expanding community partnerships, and leveraging current students and families as ambassadors through open houses, information sessions, and school events. The school also uses targeted digital outreach and social media engagement to reach families across the proposed enrollment area. Ongoing efforts prioritize early commitment and strong retention, supported by consistent family communication and a school experience that builds trust and satisfaction. This intentional shift, from launch to growth, positions the school to meet enrollment targets while maintaining alignment to its mission and the needs of the community.

3. Outline the proposed school's approach to future gathering and use of input from families, students, staff, and the community.

Rooted School Indianapolis will continue together and use input from families, students, staff, and the broader community through a structured engagement system that includes formal leadership roles for families, consistent communication routines, and multiple feedback channels throughout the school year. Rooted's approach is grounded

in the belief that sustainable school improvement requires deep partnership and shared ownership. Because Rooted's mission is centered on disrupting generational poverty and expanding opportunity for Indianapolis' most financially insecure students, Rooted will ensure that families and community members are not only informed, but actively involved in shaping school culture, strengthening student supports, and improving academic outcomes over time.

A primary structure for family voice and partnership is Rooted's Family Leadership Council. The Family Leadership Council will serve as a representative body of caregivers who meet monthly with school leadership to provide input on school priorities, culture, family engagement systems, and program design. These meetings will be structured to ensure families have meaningful opportunities to raise concerns, propose solutions, and partner with Rooted in continuous improvement. Rooted intentionally recruits a diverse group of family leaders, including families of students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and families representing different grade levels, ensuring the council reflects the broader community. Rootedl uses this council both as a listening structure and as a collaborative problem-solving body, strengthening trust and ensuring school decisions are informed by lived family experience.

In addition to the Family Leadership Council, Rooted gather's input through consistent family engagement routines embedded into the school calendar. Rooted hosts monthly family meetings and town halls where school leaders share updates on academic progress, school culture, upcoming events, and key decisions. These meetings will also provide structured opportunities for caregivers to ask questions, provide feedback, and engage in dialogue with staff. Rooted also uses advisory conferences and student-led conferences as regular touchpoints where families receive detailed information about student progress and contribute to goal setting and support planning. These conferences ensure families are not only informed of academic performance but are engaged as partners in supporting literacy, math growth, attendance, and learning habits at home.

Rooted maintains consistent, accessible communication with families through newsletters, digital messaging platforms, and regular school updates. Rooted will provide weekly or biweekly newsletters that include academic updates, upcoming events, family resources, and celebrations of student learning.

Rooted also gathers family and student input through surveys administered multiple times per year. Rooted will use beginning-of-year, mid-year, and end-of-year surveys to measure family satisfaction, communication effectiveness, school climate, and trust. Rooted will also administer developmentally appropriate student surveys to measure belonging, safety, engagement, and perceptions of learning. Survey data will be reviewed by school leadership teams and disaggregated to ensure Rooted is hearing from all groups, including special populations. Rooted will use this data to identify trends, address concerns, and refine school practices. Importantly, Rooted will close the feedback loop by sharing key findings and planned action steps with families and staff, ensuring stakeholders see that their input results in tangible improvements.

Rooted also ensures that student voice is embedded into the daily life of the school through advisory and restorative practices. Rooted's advisory structure will provide students with consistent access to an adult advocate and a community space where students can share experiences, set goals, reflect on learning, and build social-emotional skills. Advisory serves as a mechanism for gathering ongoing student feedback on school culture, engagement, and support. Through restorative circles and classroom community routines, students will have regular opportunities to express concerns, contribute ideas, and strengthen peer relationships. This ensures that student input is not limited to surveys but is embedded into the school's culture and decision-making processes in developmentally appropriate ways.

Finally, Rooted involves the broader community through partnerships and advisory structures connected to the school's location and mission. Rooted's campus on the Eastern Star Church property and within The ROCK Initiative's community ecosystem provides ongoing opportunities for collaboration with local organizations, faith-based partners, and neighborhood leaders. Rooted will engage community partners through events, family workshops, and volunteer opportunities, ensuring the school remains connected to the needs and strengths of the community it serves. Through the Family Leadership Council, monthly meetings, advisory structures, newsletters, surveys, and community partnerships, Rooted K–6 will maintain a consistent and responsive system for gathering and using stakeholder input. This approach ensures that Rooted's school model remains grounded in community needs, strengthens trust and

partnership, and supports continuous improvement toward Rooted's mission of preparing students for long-term success and financial freedom.

4. Briefly describe the desired or current facility(ies), including location, size, and amenities. Include facility needs based on the educational program and projected enrollment. Provide the current status of any facilities search, if started.

Rooted School Indianapolis currently operates on the Eastern Star Church (ESC) campus on the East Side of Indianapolis, providing a community-embedded facility solution that aligns directly with the school's mission and target population. The school occupies dedicated instructional space within the ESC campus, which supports classrooms, small-group learning, and administrative functions appropriate for its current middle and high school enrollment. In addition, Rooted leverages the nearby ROCK Community Center, also part of the Eastern Star Church ecosystem, to deliver critical student and family support, enrichment programming, mentoring, and community-based services. This integrated campus model allows Rooted to meet both academic and non-academic needs without requiring students to travel off-site, addressing access barriers common for East Side families. As enrollment grows, Rooted's facility needs will continue to center on additional classroom space, small-group and intervention rooms, and flexible areas that support its career-connected, project-based educational model. At this time, Rooted is not pursuing a separate facilities search; instead, the school is operating successfully within the ESC and ROCK campus partnership while planning for scalable use of space to meet projected enrollment and programmatic demands.

5. Explain the contingency plan if a facility is not acquired in time, or if construction timelines delay the completion of the facility plan.

N/A

6. Describe the proposed school's transportation plan

Rooted School Indianapolis is partnered with Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) to provide yellow bus transportation for eligible students, allowing families to access the school through established district transportation systems. In addition to this partnership, Rooted maintains four yellow buses of its own, which can be deployed as needed to supplement transportation services, adjust routes, or respond to enrollment growth and family needs. This dual approach provides flexibility and reliability, ensuring that transportation does not limit student access to the school and allowing Rooted to adapt transportation services as the program expands or as community needs evolve.

3.3 Policies and Assurances

Meets Standard Expectation
- The founding team is aware of and is devoting staff capacity to ensure adherence to laws applicable to charter schools, including those related to governing a public organization and protecting the rights of all students, including students with disabilities and English learners.
- The founding team provides approved organizational and school policies or drafts/plans to develop such policies related to organizational founding, conflicts of interest and code of ethics, school discipline, school safety, and commitments to serving and ensuring access for all students.

1. Identify any existing relationships that could pose actual or perceived conflicts if the application is approved; discuss specific steps the board will take to prevent any actual conflicts and mitigate perceived conflicts.

Not Applicable

3.4 Financial Plan

Meets Standard Expectation
- The budget is realistic, viable, and aligned with the educational model and execution plan.

1. Present the start-up and five-year budget projections, including start-up and Year 1 cash flow projections, using the authorizer-provided templates and/or workbooks. Include assumptions and metrics used to project revenues and expenditures.

Attached are the school's start-up and five-year budget projections, including the current year cash flow. These projections reflect the reality that the school has already launched and is currently operational, and therefore focus on sustainability, growth, and long-term financial health rather than pre-opening costs alone.

The budget assumptions are grounded in actual enrollment, staffing, and operating data from the school's initial years of operation. Revenue projections are primarily based on state per-pupil funding, with conservative enrollment growth assumptions aligned to historical trends and current recruitment capacity. Additional revenue assumptions include federal and state grant funding, where applicable, and limited philanthropic support used strategically rather than as a core operating dependency.

Expenditure projections prioritize instructional quality and student supports, with personnel costs representing the largest share of the budget. Staffing assumptions reflect competitive salary scales, benefits, and step increases, as well as the addition of critical roles to support enrollment growth, operations, and compliance as the school scales. Non-personnel expenditures include curriculum, technology, facilities, student services, professional development, and contracted services, all benchmarked to actual costs incurred since launch and adjusted modestly for inflation.

2. Describe the school's approach to meeting its financial needs and ensuring its success, consistent with the mission and key design elements, if enrollment/revenues are lower than anticipated or unanticipated costs occur.

The school ensures financial stability through a coordinated, multi-layered financial management structure that emphasizes oversight, transparency, and proactive planning. The Executive Director works closely and meets regularly with the Board Finance Committee to review financial reports, monitor budget performance, assess risks, and make strategic decisions aligned to the school's mission and long-term sustainability. This ongoing collaboration ensures that the board maintains strong fiscal oversight while remaining informed and responsive to changing financial conditions.

On the operational side, the Executive Director partners with the Operations Manager and AT Financial to manage day-to-day financial execution, including purchasing, payroll coordination, expense monitoring, and internal controls. In addition, the school engages a third-party finance support team to provide professional accounting services, financial reporting, compliance support, and grant management. This team supports accurate bookkeeping, timely reporting, audit preparation, and responsible stewardship of public and grant funds.

To further strengthen financial planning and strategic decision-making, the school also works with MAZE Education, a strategic consulting firm that provides finance-focused guidance, long-term forecasting, and sustainability planning. Together, this integrated approach, combining internal leadership, board oversight, external financial expertise, and strategic consulting, positions the school to respond effectively to enrollment fluctuations or unanticipated costs while protecting core programming and ensuring alignment with the school's mission and key design elements.

3. Describe how the school will approach the development of financial policies and systems. Include any financial

services expected to be contracted for by the school; describe the selection process and the criteria to select and evaluate these contractors. Or, if financial management will be handled by in-house staff, describe the qualifications of key internal finance staff and the hiring plan.

The school has already developed and implemented financial policies, systems, and internal controls as part of its operational launch and ongoing operation. Because the school is currently open, its approach to financial management is not theoretical; it is grounded in established practices designed to ensure fiscal responsibility, compliance, transparency, and long-term sustainability. These systems include clear budgeting procedures, purchasing and approval protocols, separation of duties, monthly financial reporting, and routine cash flow monitoring to ensure the school can meet obligations while protecting program quality.

Financial management is supported through a combination of internal leadership and contracted expertise. The Executive Director and Operations Manager oversee day-to-day financial systems, ensure adherence to financial policies and procedures, and monitor spending against the board-approved budget. To strengthen accuracy, compliance, and capacity, the school contracts with a third-party finance support team for accounting services, financial reporting, grant management, and audit preparation. In addition, the school partners with MAZE Education for strategic financial consulting, including long-term forecasting, sustainability planning, and budget refinement aligned to enrollment and program priorities.

Contracted financial service providers are selected based on demonstrated experience supporting charter schools, knowledge of Indiana school finance and compliance requirements, capacity to provide timely reporting and responsive support, and a proven track record of strong internal controls and audit readiness. Contractors are evaluated through ongoing performance monitoring, including timeliness and accuracy of reports, compliance with deadlines, responsiveness to leadership and board requests, and the school's overall financial health. Through these established systems and partnerships, the school maintains strong financial controls and ensures that financial decision-making remains aligned to the mission and key design elements as shown through clean audits.

4. Describe the process and procedure for conducting an annual audit of the financial and administrative operations of the network/school.

Each year, the school engages an independent, licensed external auditing firm to complete a full financial and administrative audit in accordance with all applicable federal and state requirements. The audit includes a review of financial statements, internal controls, cash management, purchasing and payroll practices, grant compliance, and adherence to the school's financial policies and procedures.

The Executive Director and Financial Accountants coordinate the audit preparation process, working closely with the school's third-party finance support team to ensure all documentation is complete, accurate, and organized prior to fieldwork. This includes compiling general ledger records, bank reconciliations, payroll documentation, accounts payable/receivable records, grant reports, board meeting minutes, and evidence of internal approval processes. The school's finance support team assists with audit readiness, including pre-audit checklists, compliance reviews, and ensuring timely completion of all reporting requirements.

Once the audit is completed, the auditor presents findings to the Executive team which reports to the full board. The board reviews the final audit report, management letter and any recommendations for strengthening internal controls or procedures. If corrective actions are identified, school leadership develops a written response and implementation plan, which is monitored by the Finance Committee to ensure timely follow-through. This process ensures the school maintains fiscal integrity, continuous improvement, and accountability to stakeholders.

This section applies only to pre-existing schools or applicants partnering with an established EMO or CMO. Education One will heavily weigh the historical performance of the operator or management organization in determining whether to advance the application. Applicants must provide information about all schools currently or previously operated by the organization or its partner. Education One reserves the right to request additional documentation throughout the review process.

1. Provide an analysis of your school or organization's academic performance, highlighting both areas of consistent success and areas of challenge. Describe the key factors that have contributed to strong student outcomes and sustained performance as well as contributing causes of any persistent academic struggles. Discuss how the organization has responded to both types of outcomes, including what lessons have been learned, what strategies have been scaled or abandoned, and how these insights are shaping the approach moving forward. Analysis should be consistent with the Historical Performance Workbook.

Category	Metric	2022	2023	2024	2025
Demographics	Free and Reduced Lunch	100%	100%	100%	100%
	Special Education (SPED)	N/A	16%	20%	15%
	English Language Learners (ELL)	N/A	3%	8%	12%
	Black / African American	N/A	95.4%	95.4%	84%
Achievement	ILEARN ELA Proficiency (7-8)	N/A	6.3%	15.4%	25.6%
	ILEARN Math Proficiency (7-8)	N/A	9.4%	5.8%	12.5%
	Biology ECA Proficiency	N/A	0.0%	21.4%	18.2%
	HS GPA > 2.5	N/A	N/A	40.0%	58.3%

	(% Students)				
	Graduation Rate	N/A	N/A	100%	100%
MS Subgroups	SPED ELA Proficiency	0%	0%	0%	0%
	ELL ELA Proficiency	N/A	N/A	N/A	40.0%
	SPED Math Proficiency	0%	N/A	N/A	0%
	ELL Math Proficiency	0%	N/A	N/A	12.5%
Growth (HS Math)	9th Grade PSAT Math Benchmark	N/A	8%	0%	4%
	10th Grade PSAT Math Benchmark	N/A	8%	0%	0%
	11th Grade PSAT Math Benchmark	N/A	0%	11%	16%
Growth (HS ERW)	9th Grade PSAT ERW Benchmark	N/A	0%	31%	24%
	10th Grade PSAT ERW Benchmark	N/A	9%	35%	10%
	11th Grade SAT ERW Benchmark	N/A	8%	11%	22%

Academic Performance Analysis

    A. **Areas of Consistent Success**

The school has demonstrated significant and consistent growth in ELA Proficiency, rising from 6.3% in 2023 to 25.6% in 2025. This success is mirrored in the GPA trends, where the percentage of students maintaining a GPA above 2.5 rose from 40% to 58.3% in a single year. Additionally, the school has maintained a 100% Graduation Rate for the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years. The English Language Learner (ELL) subgroup showed a remarkable breakthrough in 2025, reaching 40% proficiency in ELA, which the school attributes to its scaffolding efforts and personalized instructional services.

B. **Areas of Challenge and Response**
   Math Proficiency remains a persistent challenge, characterized by a dip in 2024 (5.8%) before recovering to 12.5% in 2025. Similarly, Special Education (SPED) performance has remained at 0% proficiency across both Math and ELA, highlighting a need for more intensive intervention.

C. **Lessons Learned & Strategic Shifts:**
   - **Scaling Success:** The school is scaling its literacy-focused interventions into all grade levels to build on ELA gains including a dedicated block schedule every Friday utilizing a co-teaching model and test-aligned strategies, practice, and tiered instruction.
   - **Addressing Struggles:** In response to stagnant math scores, the school has introduced a "Strategic focus on math inclusion" and is doubling down on strategic math interventions, including high dosage, intersession, and after-school tutoring programs.
   - **Refining Support:** The school has shifted toward a "mastery-based hybrid model" to allow for more granular tracking of student progress, moving away from generalized instruction toward data-informed small groups.

2.   List any contracts with charter schools that have been terminated by either the organization or the school, including the reason(s) for such termination and whether the termination was for "material breach."

N/A

3. List any and all charter revocations, non-renewals, shortened or conditional renewals, or withdrawals /non-openings of schools operated by the organization and provide an explanation.

N/A

4. Explain any performance deficiency or compliance violations that have led to formal authorizer intervention with any school operated by the organization in the last three years, and how such deficiencies or violations were resolved.

Rooted Enrollment

The original budgeted enrollment figures for FY24 and FY25 were based on historical trends, application interest, and strategic growth plans anticipating year-over-year increases as Rooted gained visibility and demonstrated strong student outcomes.

Rooted's original FY25 budget was built around a projected enrollment of **177 students**. This figure reflected an **ambitious but optimistic target** based on several assumptions: steady year-over-year growth, successful early recruitment campaigns, increased brand awareness, and continued positive outcomes for scholars. These projections also assumed an upward trend in interest and conversion rates coming out of the 2022–23 school year.

However, actual enrollment for FY25 finalized at **158 students** — 19 students below projections. Several external factors contributed to this variance, including increased competition, family mobility, transportation limitations, and community skepticism following recent school closures in the area. While Rooted experienced strong family interest and application numbers, conversion to actual enrollment was impacted by these broader dynamics.

However, actual enrollment was lower than projected due to the recruitment and re-enrollment challenges described above. In response, Rooted leadership took immediate steps to protect the school's financial health:

- **Revised and realigned the budget** based on actual enrollment and Average Daily Membership (ADM), ensuring that expenditures reflected updated revenue projections.
- **Adjusting staffing plans and operational expenses** to match the reduced per-pupil funding without compromising essential student supports.
- **Delaying or phasing in non-essential expenditures**, including certain materials, contracted services, and facility upgrades.
- **Secured alternative revenue streams**, including grants, philanthropic donations, and in-kind partnerships to close funding gaps.
- **Tightening budget assumptions** and applying a more conservative forecasting model for cash flow and revenue projections.
- **Maintaining adequate cash reserves and liquidity ratios**, even with the revised enrollment, to ensure compliance with OEI financial indicators.

This realignment allowed Rooted to maintain a **balanced, responsible budget** at 158 students while continuing to meet core academic, operational, and financial goals. Looking ahead, the school has committed to improved enrollment tracking, stronger community partnerships, and year-round recruitment efforts to both stabilize and grow enrollment , but will now **budget based on verified data and historical trends rather than optimistic growth assumptions alone**.

As a result of these measures, **Rooted met or remained on track to meet all key OEI financial indicators**, including:

- Positive net income margins
- Adequate cash on hand
- Debt service coverage ratio
- Timely submission of financial reporting and audits

Going forward, Rooted has adopted a more conservative enrollment forecasting model, launched a year-round recruitment strategy, and developed a robust data dashboard to monitor family engagement, applications, and conversion rates. These measures will ensure Rooted can meet enrollment variance expectations while remaining financially sustainable.

5. Identify any current or past litigation, including arbitration proceedings, by the school, that has involved the organization or any charter schools it operates. Provide, in the attachment section, a summary of the following information: (a) the demand, (b) any response to the demand, and (c) the results of the arbitration or litigation.

See Attachment 22.