



Excel Academy Charter Schools Charter Consolidation Amendment Request

September 2013

Executive Summary

The Board of Trustees of Excel Academy Charter Schools seeks to amend its original regional middle school charter (Excel Academy Charter School) by consolidating into this original charter the seats from its other two charters (Excel Academy Charter School – Chelsea and Excel Academy Charter School – Boston II) to create a single regional charter serving students in grades 5 through 12 in the demographically and geographically connected communities of East Boston and Chelsea. The primary purpose of this major consolidation amendment is to maximize Excel’s impact on East Boston and Chelsea by creating a pipeline to college within the Excel network of schools. Through this major amendment, Excel seeks to create a community-based cluster of high-performing college-preparatory schools whereby the graduates of all three of our middle schools matriculate into a single Excel high school.

1. Governance and Leadership Structure

a. Provide evidence of the Board’s effectiveness thus far in overseeing multiple charter schools.

For the past ten years, Excel Academy’s Board of Trustees has effectively overseen the governance of Excel Academy’s flagship middle school in East Boston, and during the past two years has successfully overseen the launch and governance of Excel’s two new middle schools in East Boston and Chelsea. It was, and is, of utmost importance to the Board that these schools’ academic performance, fiscal health, student enrollment and retention, facility space, and instructional/administrative expertise remain both consistent and strong across all three schools during this critical growth period. The following data highlights the Board’s effectiveness in doing so.

Academic Performance

Prior to growth, Excel Academy’s flagship school in East Boston had a tremendous track record of academic success, with Excel students consistently outperforming their middle school peers on the annually administered Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) exams. Under the Board’s guidance, not only did these results remain consistent at Excel Academy Charter School while the network was growing, but similar academic results were also achieved at Excel’s two newly opened schools.

- On the 2012 MCAS exams, Excel Academy Charter School students ranked top in the state with their MCAS scores. Approximately 99% of Excel-East Boston students passed the 2012 ELA MCAS exam (89% scored Advanced/Proficient), while 98% of students passed the Math MCAS exam (90% scored Advanced/Proficient). Results from the 2013 MCAS exams were similarly impressive, with 98% of students passing the ELA MCAS exam (90% scoring Advanced/Proficient) and 97% passing the Math exam (84% scoring Advanced/Proficient).
- In its first year of operation, Excel Academy – Chelsea posted solid results. On the 2012 MCAS exams, 96% of Excel Academy – Chelsea students passed the ELA exam (60% scored Advanced/Proficient), and 84% of students passed the Math exam (49% scored Advanced/Proficient). During the 2012-2013 school year, Excel Academy – Chelsea demonstrated strong growth with 95% of students passing the 2013 ELA MCAS exam (69% scored Advanced/Proficient) and 94% of students passing the math exam (74% scored Advanced/Proficient).
- Excel Academy – Boston II recently completed its first year of operation, and the 2013 MCAS results highlight the strength of this newly established academic program. On the 2013 exams, 100% of students passed the ELA exam (79% scored Advanced/Proficient) and 98% of students passed the math exam (93% scored Advanced/Proficient).



- Across the network of Excel schools, 95% of Excel 5th grade students passed both the 2013 ELA and Math MCAS exams, and 98% and 97% of Excel 6th grade students passed the 2013 ELA and Math MCAS exams, respectively.

Fiscal Health

Excel does not expect this amendment request to have a major impact on its overall financial model. Because the programmatic operations of Excel's middle schools are largely unaffected by the amendment, the middle schools' financial model is likewise unaffected.

Over the past decade, under the guidance of the Board of Trustees, Excel has remained in solid fiscal health, operating primarily on public funds with a portion of funds being raised externally to subsidize wrap-around programming and services such as the Graduate Services program, a program through which Excel continues to support its middle school graduates through high school and college. In response to replication, Excel Academy's Board of Trustees launched a Capital Campaign in 2011 to fund the launch and governance of its two new middle schools. Close to \$5 million has been raised thus far in support of these efforts and Excel has identified an additional \$4 million in anticipated commitments. A capital plan is currently in place to fund the ongoing rollout of Excel's two new middle schools and the launch of the high school in fall 2015.

The schools have received clean audits during each year of operation.

For additional information regarding Excel's fiscal health and budgeting process/oversight, see section 2c on page 13.

Student Enrollment and Retention

Excel Academy Charter Schools' Board of Trustees and school-based leadership are committed to serving the students of East Boston, Chelsea and the surrounding communities and have consistently worked tirelessly to recruit, enroll and retain a student body representative of the communities served.

As it was prior to growth, community interest in Excel's program has remained consistently high during replication. For the past several years, Excel has had large waitlists of students and families seeking to receive an Excel education. During the 2012-2013 student recruitment season, the organization received 1,280 applications from 768 students. (As applicants can apply for more than one Excel school, the number of applications exceeds the number of applicants.) All Excel schools are fully enrolled and have deep waitlists for the upcoming school year. Our flagship campus alone received over 628 applications for the upcoming school year. Of the combined 168 seats available in the 5th grade at our three schools for the 2013-2014 school year, we received over 800 applications—five times the demand for supply available. The strong demand for our schools serves as evidence of our ability to attract students and families. We believe there will be similar, if not greater, demand at the secondary school level given the expressed interests of our current families and the relative paucity of tuition-free, college-preparatory high school options available to families in our targeted communities.

As in outlined in our schools' Recruitment & Retention Plan, the network has set an annual student retention goal of 93 percent. All three Excel middle schools met or exceeded this annual goal during the 2012-2013 school year:

- Excel Academy Charter School posted a retention rate of 98 percent.
- Excel Academy – Chelsea posted a retention rate of 94 percent.
- Excel Academy – Boston II posted a retention rate of 93 percent.

Facility Space

All three Excel schools are currently operating in facility space that meets the needs of our students, teachers, service providers, and administration.



For the first nine years of Excel's existence, the flagship school operated in approximately 12,000 square feet of leased space in East Boston. While this facility certainly served the Excel program well during its initial years, the Board of Trustees sought to find a permanent location for Excel that would better accommodate some of the school's programmatic needs, while remaining within East Boston and transit-accessible. To that end, Excel's non-profit affiliate, Friends of Excel Academy Charter Schools, Inc., entered into an agreement with the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston in July 2010 to purchase the former St. Mary's Star of the Sea school facility located at 58 Moore Street in East Boston, and closed on the property in September 2011. During the 2011-2012 school year, the 19,000 square foot building was gutted and rehabilitated and a 2,500 square foot addition was built. Construction was completed in August 2012, and the students and staff of Excel's flagship school occupied this new facility during the 2012-2013 school year.

Excel Academy – Chelsea launched in the fall of 2011 in a centrally-located office building located at 180 2nd Street in Chelsea. In preparation for the school's opening, the 12,000 square foot leased facility underwent renovations to suit Excel's programmatic needs. A final round of renovations took place during summer 2013, and the facility has been fully built out to effectively serve 224 students, grades 5 through 8. Excel Academy's Board of Trustees has entered into a ten-year lease with the facility's owner, ensuring the school an adequate facility for the foreseeable future.

The relocation of Excel's flagship school to 58 Moore Street in East Boston allowed for the launch of Excel Academy – Boston II in the previously occupied facility located at 1150 Saratoga Street in East Boston. As this facility effectively served a fully enrolled middle school in the past, minimal renovations were needed to accommodate the launch of the new Excel school. Excel's Board of Trustees has entered into a five-year lease with the facility's owner, both ensuring a safe and effective place for the school to operate, as well as giving the Board ample time to explore future facility options.

Recruitment & Retention of Instructional and Administrative Talent

The recruitment and retention of exceptional instructional and administrative staff is critical to the success of Excel's program. Over the past several years, in response to Excel's growth, the organization's recruiting needs have increased quite dramatically. For the 2013-2014 school year, Excel's Director of Recruitment was responsible for hiring 45 staff members, including 36 full-time hires and 9 part-time individuals, across the Excel network. We anticipate that these numbers will remain similarly elevated in the coming years as the newest schools roll out one grade level at a time. To accommodate this ongoing increase, Excel has developed a comprehensive network-wide staff recruitment system. This comprehensive staff recruitment system includes:

- The hiring of a full-time Director of Recruitment;
- Drafting and finalizing of a comprehensive recruitment manual;
- Investing in an applicant tracking system (TalentEd Recruit & Hire);
- Network-wide implemented recruiting protocols by Hiring Managers (as defined in the recruitment manual);
- Implementation of a Diversity Recruitment Task Force to bolster efforts to recruit people of color;
- Implementation of a staff referral program; and
- Building of a critical network of recruitment partners.

The long-term goal in building this network-wide recruitment system is to ensure that Excel continues to hire the highest caliber staff across our entire network, so that all Excel schools operate with consistent high academic standards.

As Excel invests so much time and energy in the recruitment of its staff members, the organization is equally committed to both the development and retention of these exceptional educators and administrators. One of the hallmarks of Excel's professional climate is its emphasis on continued improvement. Every staff member commits to an ongoing process of professional development in order to hone his/her skills and performance, both in and out of



the classroom. Excel's commitment to developing and cultivating its teachers and administrators and contributing to their professional growth has resulted in average yearly retention rates of over 80 percent over the last five years. The most common reasons for attrition include graduate school, performance, and pursuit of external opportunities.

b. Describe how the Board currently oversees a network of charter schools. Describe how the Board will govern one large charter school with multiple campuses and hold those campuses accountable to rigorous goals.

The Excel Academy Board of Trustees is currently comprised of 11 individuals who hold all three Excel schools' charters, and who are responsible for all fiduciary, regulatory and compliance issues. The Board is responsible for evaluating the success of Excel Academy's three schools by tracking each school's progress towards meeting the goals outlined in our accountability plan, student and staff attrition data, and financial health.

The general structure, roles and responsibilities, and meeting frequency of the Board of Trustees will not change in response to the consolidation of Excel's three schools into a single charter. The Board will continue to meet at least five times per year, and the academic performance, organizational and financial health of each campus will be discussed at that time.

Under consolidation, the Board will continue to hold responsibility for both managing and evaluating the CEO, and the CEO in turn will, ultimately, be responsible for overseeing each school leader. The Board evaluation of the CEO will continue to be conducted through both an anonymous electronic staff survey, in-person interviews with those individuals who report directly to the CEO, and an assessment of meeting performance goals and the direct observation of the CEO. The evaluation of school leaders will be managed by the Network's Managing Director of Programming, who reports directly to the CEO. The evaluation process for school leaders will be informed by multiple data points, including direct observation in meeting performance goals, weekly campus check-in meetings, self-evaluation by school leaders, 360-degree feedback gathered on school leader performance by a sample of direct reports, and an anonymous electronic survey of staff.

c. Describe the primary challenges of operating as a network versus a single school and how these challenges were identified.

In making the decision to replicate from a single school to a network of schools, Excel's Board of Trustees committed to ensuring that quantity did not compromise quality. As a measure of "quality control," the Board engaged in a comprehensive analysis of the key pillars of the Excel program. As the organization has replicated, we have done so with integrity to these four pillars which has ensured program consistency and quality across all Excel schools.

As Excel has grown, we have experienced some "pressure points" that have pushed our thinking about what is a school-based decision versus what is a network decision in terms of program design and execution – the finer details of the Excel pillars. These challenges were identified in "real-time" as school leaders, administrative teams, and school-based staff members built out the Excel program within their particular school community. To streamline and clarify decision-making authority and processes, Excel has created a decision rights protocol that details the design and implementation decisions that are made by network leadership, by school leadership, and by school staff. Clarity and explicit naming of decision rights has enabled the organization to address program design and execution decisions in a way that empowers staff closest to a decision while upholding a bar for quality across the Network.

d. Describe how the consolidation of the existing schools relates to the needs of the communities to be served.

Latinos are the single fastest growing population in the United States. In a few short years, one in every four public school students will be Latino. Yet, Latino students face persistent obstacles to educational attainment. Nationally, Latino students are more than three grade levels behind their white peers by the end of 8th grade; half as likely to have access to a college-preparatory high school; and far more likely to attend a high school with low expectations for student performance. The consequences of these inexcusable statistics are startling. Only about half of all Latino students earn their high school diploma on time. Of those Latinos who do complete high school, only half are as



likely as their peers to be prepared for college. And just 13% of Latinos hold a bachelor's degree, and 4% have completed graduate or professional degree programs.

As recognized by the highest levels of government, the academic underperformance of Latinos is a national educational crisis with far reaching consequences. And, sadly, we have proof of the Latino achievement gap right in our own backyard. While Massachusetts has one of the best public school systems in the country, the state owns one of the largest achievement gaps between Hispanic students and their white peers. In 2009, the high school graduation rate in Massachusetts was:

- 79.1% for all students (73.4% nationally)
- 84.5% for white students (78.8% nationally)
- 55.5% for Latino students (63% nationally)

It was the stark realities of the achievement gap that, over a decade ago, motivated and drove the Excel Board of Trustees to imagine a different kind of school for students residing in East Boston and Chelsea, communities with a fast growing Hispanic population who are most likely to fall victim to the achievement gap. Excel Academy Charter School was founded as a “no excuses,” rigorous, college-preparatory public school, and the vision for this new school was simple but quite profound: to eradicate the achievement gap and put East Boston and Chelsea students on a trajectory toward college completion.

For the past 10 years, Excel Academy has succeeded in being a true “community school” by enrolling a student body who is representative of the population we set out to serve. Across Excel’s network of three schools, our students are:

- 73% low-income;
- 78% Hispanic; and
- 48% speak a language other than English at home.

And Excel is achieving what we know is possible in urban education. Over the past several years, Excel students at all three Excel campuses have been amongst the top performing students in the state, as measured by the annual MCAS exams.

As Excel’s middle school populations grow, the urgency to expand our high school program has increased. Approval of this consolidation request will ensure Excel will be able to serve all of its middle school students in a single high school that is best positioned to advance our students’ trajectory to college.

e. Explain any proposed changes to the Board’s organizational structure, decision-making processes, and/or modifications of the existing Board’s membership to help oversee and support the Board’s plans to consolidate.

As previously noted above, the Board’s organizational structure, and supporting infrastructure, has served Excel well during a time of growth for the organization. We do not plan to make any significant modifications to the organizational structure, decision-making processes, or board membership that are directly correlated to the Board’s plans to consolidate its three existing charters into one charter with four distinct school campuses.

Indirectly related, the Board of Trustees does plan to extend its membership to better support the organization’s plans to operate a “feeder” high school. Board member expansion is anticipated to fill two key functions:

- Fundraising capacity
- High school programming expertise and experience

As described in more detail in section 2c on page 13, the Board of Trustees has launched a capital campaign to support the build-out of our two newer middle schools, the launch of a single Excel high school, and the acquisition



of a facility to house our high school campus. In expanding the size and composition of the Board, we will seek individuals who have the capacity and connections to support our fundraising efforts.

Furthermore, the Board of Trustees has established an advisory board of local community members and educational experts who will provide ongoing counsel and support as we plan and launch the Excel high school. The Board of Trustees intends to further enhance its own institutional knowledge and expertise in high school design and program execution by recruiting and securing at least one new board member with relevant high school experience.

f. Describe and explain the current reporting structure between the Board of Trustees, network leadership, and school (campus) leadership. Describe the roles and responsibilities of key leadership positions. Describe the proposed changes to these structures and/or responsibilities of key staff.

In moving from overseeing and operating a single charter school to overseeing a network of three middle schools, the Board of Trustees put in place a refined reporting structure to streamline decision-making and accountability across the organization. This reporting structure, defined in more detail below, has served the organization well during a period of rapid growth and the Board of Trustees will continue to maintain this structure upon charter consolidation.

The current reporting structure of the organization consists of four key bodies/individuals fulfilling key roles and functions: The Board of Trustees, the CEO, the Network Team, and specifically the Managing Director of Network Programming, and School Leaders.

- The *Board of Trustees* holds ultimate legal and fiduciary oversight for the organization. The Board of Trustees is responsible for hiring and evaluating the organization's CEO.
- The *CEO* has overall management responsibilities for the organization. The CEO reports directly to the Board of Trustees, and through the Network Team, ultimately manages and evaluates the leader of each individual school campus.
- The *Network Team*, specifically the Managing Director of Network Programming, is responsible for managing the leader of each school campus. The Managing Director of Network Programming reports to the CEO.
- *School leaders* are responsible for overseeing and managing the staff, results and programs of his/her school campus. Each school leader reports to the Managing Director of Network Programming.

g. Describe and explain the succession planning for Board members, including Board officers, network leadership positions, and school leadership positions.

Ensuring a pipeline of leadership at the Board level is important to the overall health of the Board, and ultimately, the organization as whole. As such, the Board of Trustees has developed and named a Governance Committee which has the responsibility of continually seeking, recruiting and training new board members. This committee is also responsible for identifying and grooming Board leadership. Similarly to the succession philosophy for staff (which is defined below,) we believe that Board leadership is best positioned for success if internally identified and groomed. Over the 11 year history of the organization, Excel has had one Board Chair transition. In making that transition, the person identified as the future board chair had several years of experience as an Excel board member and received targeted support and professional development the year prior to assuming the Chair role. We believe this kind of foresight and action is important for ensuring a smooth transition and we have empowered and equipped the Board's Governance Committee to fulfill this key function on behalf of the organization.



For staff positions, Excel's general position is that leadership, at both the Network and school level, is best identified and groomed from within. As such, we have developed specific philosophies and programs to ensure and support succession planning at the staff level.

- *Network Leadership:* Given the complexities of Excel as an organization, experience has taught us that Network leadership is most successful "in coming up through the ranks" with practical experience at the school level in either instruction or operations. As such, we have positioned Network leadership positions as an opportunity for professional growth and part of the career ladder for Excel school-level staff. To date, approximately half of network-level positions are filled by individuals who previously had a school-based role. And while not averse to external hiring, we have used internal identification and grooming as the primary strategy for succession planning at the Network level.
- *School Leadership:* Again, Excel's philosophy is to groom internal talent to assume future leadership positions. Through external partnerships, such as Building Excellent Schools, we have actively sought out and provided professional development opportunities to grow our leadership "bench." Furthermore, Excel has implemented a "Principal Residency" program whereby future leaders are provided both professional development and on-the-job training for leading an Excel school. The school leaders at both of our replication schools were identified and groomed internally for their current roles. We also anticipate that our high school principal will participate in Excel's principal residency program for the 2014-2015 school year before launching the high school in Fall 2015.

h. Provide information regarding the Board's process for and experience with evaluating itself and the school leader(s). Describe the Board's process for developing the annual budgets, monitoring the schools' finances, and conducting long-term financial and strategic planning for the network.

A successful network of schools is both academically and organizationally strong, and it is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees to ensure that this is the case. The Board of Trustees has historically evaluated the success of each Excel school by tracking the school's progress towards meeting the goals outlined in our accountability plan, student and staff attrition data, and the school's status with respect to staying at or under budget. These responsibilities will remain the same post-consolidation.

As previously noted, under consolidation, the Board will continue to hold responsibility for both managing and evaluating the CEO, and the CEO in turn will be ultimately responsible for evaluating each school leader. The Board evaluation of the CEO will continue to be conducted through both an anonymous electronic survey as well as in-person interviews with those individuals who report directly to the CEO. The evaluation of school leaders, which is conducted by the Network Managing Director of Programming who is overseen by the CEO, will continue to be conducted through a combination of direct observation, weekly campus check-in meetings, self-evaluation by school leaders, 360-degree feedback gathered on school leader performance through at least five interviews with key staff members, and an anonymous electronic survey of staff.

The Board will continue to meet five times per year, at which time they will review school-specific financial and academic achievement data. In addition, the Board has also appointed members to school-specific task forces responsible for providing school-specific oversight to each Excel school.

Ultimately, the Board of Trustees has been, and will be, responsible for the financial oversight of the Excel network. The Board appoints a Treasurer with specific expertise in finance and/or accounting to lead the Board's fiscal oversight and s/he serves as the chair of the Board's Finance Committee. The Treasurer and Finance Committee support the Board in monitoring the network's finances by providing expert opinion on financial matters and helping the Board be wise consumers of data related to the network's finances. Furthermore, the Finance Committee works with the CEO to develop the annual budget for the network and presents it to the Board for approval annually. The



Finance Committee also ensures that financial reports with analyses of actual spending versus budgeted figures are submitted to the full Board quarterly for review and discussion.

In collaboration with the Finance Committee, the CEO will continue to develop financial controls and fiscal management policies to govern the daily financial management of each campus that comply with generally accepted accounting procedures. The CEO will also continue to work with the Finance Committee to prepare a detailed annual budget that showed line-item expenses and assumptions for various expenditures. The Finance Committee will then continue to recommend the proposed budget to the full board for approval. The CEO will present a variance report of revenues and expenditures at the close of each fiscal quarter and this report will be reviewed by the full Board.

While the Board is responsible for financial oversight, the CEO will continue to oversee the day-to-day finances of the school. S/he meets quarterly with the full Board to review the network's financial position and the year-to-date budget. The CEO also works with each school's administration to manage spending against the Board-approved budget and is responsible for ensuring all financial reporting requirements, including the Annual Report, End-of-Year Report, and Annual Independent Audit, are met.

Furthermore, the Managing Director of Network Operations works closely with School Leaders and the school-based Deans of Operations to manage the day-to-day financial operations of the school, including procurement of supplies, equipment and services; coordination of payroll systems and benefits packages; cash-flow-management and accounts payable; monitoring of the budget and development of initial budgets and cash flow systems. Furthermore, the network will continue to contract with an external financial consultant who will provide all reconciliation services on a monthly basis to ensure proper separation of duties at the school level.

2. Management

a. Describe how network leadership currently oversees a network of charter schools as it relates to key organizational decisions, including curriculum, professional development, culture, staffing, financial management and operations. Describe how the leadership will govern one large charter school with multiple campuses and hold those campuses accountable to rigorous goals.

Excel's growth strategy has been driven by two important factors: a desire to serve more students and an unwavering commitment to maintaining the highest quality in all of our schools. In order to achieve consistent quality while serving more students, Excel created a Network Team to serve as the "central office" for the Excel network and to provide critical network-wide leadership, oversight and support.

The Network Team is responsible for driving quality and sustainability across the growing network of Excel schools. Collectively, this seven-person team, led by the CEO, provides a range of supports and services to Excel schools that leverage our growing scale, maximize efficacy, and drive continual improvement. It is the role of the Network Team to identify the fundamental pillars of the Excel's operating model and support individual schools in implementing these pillars, as well as sharing best practices among the network. Core to Excel's replication effort is a continued, relentless commitment to quality in all of our current and future schools.

There are four primary areas of focus on the Network Team. These include Strategic Growth & Development, Operations & Finance, Academic Programming, and Talent. An overview of the responsibilities that fall into each of these key functional areas can be found below.

Strategic Growth & Development

This two person team, which consists of the Managing Director of Strategic Growth & Development and the Manager of Strategic Growth & Development, is responsible for a range of critical activities which include:



- Oversight of all network-wide fundraising initiatives including grant writing, individual and corporate donor cultivation and management, annual appeals, events and the broader \$15 million capital campaign, of which we have secured close to \$9 million in pledges and anticipated revenue;
- Management of all community partnerships and community relations activities;
- Execution of the Excel network's external relations efforts including marketing material, social media outreach, and media placements;
- Management of all three campuses' student recruitment activities, including grassroots marketing, application processing and the enrollment lotteries;
- Board of Trustees support; and
- Oversight of general growth strategy including researching, planning and applying for additional charters and charter amendments.

Network Finance & Operations

This two person team, which consists of a Managing Director of Network Operations and a Manager of Network Operations & Finance, is responsible for a range of large-scale, network-wide initiatives which include:

- Oversight of facility acquisition, financing and development to ensure that all Excel campuses are operating in facility space that is conducive to providing exceptional academic programming to our students;
- Financial management and reporting including development of network-wide budgets, with support and oversight from the Board of Trustees and the CEO;
- Adherence to and reporting on all state, federal, and DESE compliance regulations;
- Management of back-office HR activities including payroll, benefits administration, and policies;
- General network-wide operations management, including supporting all school-based operations staff; and
- Operations strategic planning, including identifying opportunities to maximize network-wide efficiencies and streamline operational practices.

Academic Programming

The Network Team's Managing Director of Network Programming is responsible for providing network-wide academic programming support. Her key functional areas of responsibility include:

- Supervision, management and support of School Leaders, including weekly meetings and ongoing observations and evaluations;
- Development of the Network-level vision for program improvement and innovation;
- Community of Practice facilitation for school and instructional leaders;
- Professional development of future school leaders;
- Oversight of curricular alignment and collaboration across Excel campuses;
- Development and management of network-wide professional development strategies and opportunities;
- Execution of school health assessments; and
- Management of network-wide interim assessment and data analysis.

Talent

Excel's Director of Recruitment is responsible for ensuring that only the most of qualified educators and administrators are serving our students and their families. Key areas of responsibility include:

- Management of all staff recruiting activities including job postings, resume reviews, phone interviews, and on-site interviews, as well as building of a broader recruitment and referral network so as to ensure that there exists a robust pipeline of prospective candidates for all future vacancies;



- Development of career pathway and evaluation systems;
- Drafting and execution of compensation policies to ensure Excel's compensation scale remains competitive amongst our peers;
- Oversight of a leadership pipeline development; and
- Management of succession planning.

CEO

As the leader of the organization, Excel's CEO is responsible for managing all members of the Network Team, and thus holds all of their responsibilities and goals as his own. Key areas of responsibility include:

- Support to the governing board in fulfilling their legal, financial and fiduciary responsibilities;
- Direction setting and performance assessment for the Network;
- Management of key leadership positions (Talent, Strategic Growth and Development, Operations, and Programming) within the Network Team;
- Oversight of, with the support of the Managing Director of Network Programming, the academic performance of the Network as a whole as well as of individual schools within the Network.
- Oversight of, with the support of the Managing Director of Network Operations, the overall fiscal health of the organization, and
- Oversight of, with the support of the Managing Director of Strategic Growth and Development, the fundraising efforts of the organization.

Over the past 24 months, Excel has grown from a single school into a network with three campuses, tripling its student body without compromising quality. Consolidation of Excel's three campuses under a single charter will in no way alter the network leadership structure as it currently stands and will actually allow the Network Team to be even more efficient in its customized support of Excel schools.

b. Describe the network's efforts to build organizational capacity, share resources and best practices, and improve consistency and productivity across schools, while improving educational outcomes and ensuring academic results.

While pursuing replication, Excel has been ardently committed to maintaining both the academic and operational integrity of our program. To ensure that this remains a primary focus, Excel Academy has undergone a degree of network-wide programmatic restructuring in an effort to build out and better maximize our organizational capacity, share best practices and resources across campuses, and improve the educational outcomes of all of our students. These network-wide efforts are highlighted below.

Setting of Network-Wide Organizational Goals

Excel has always set and measured progress against organizational goals relating to student achievement results, post-graduate success rates, financial stability, human capital and organizational growth. However, in response to growth, it has become a priority of the senior leadership team across the Excel network to ensure that all staff members are aware of, bought in to, and actively invested in these critical goals.

To that end, Excel now hosts a network-wide "Summit" at the start of every school year during which time staff members across all three schools and the Network Team come together to discuss the organizational goals for the upcoming school year and how to best work together to achieve these goals. This dialogue ensures that all staff members are aware of the organization's key objectives and know how their day-to-day work is directly impacting the larger network-wide goals. An overview of the organizational goals for the 2013-2014 school year can be found below.



- Central Goal: Student Achievement Gains — Ensure students make annual, significant, measureable content and skill gains
 - Metrics:
 - 100% of students will pass their annual MCAS exams;
 - At least 90% of students will score advanced or proficient on the MCAS exams; and
 - At least 50% of students will score advanced on the MCAS exams.
- Long-Term Goal: Post-Graduate Success — Ensure graduates remain on a college-preparatory trajectory.
 - Metrics:
 - 90% of graduating 8th graders will matriculate to college-preparatory high schools that send 80% of more of its graduates to 4-year colleges/universities;
 - 100% of all alumni will graduate from high school or earn their GED;
 - 75% of alumni in 12th grade will matriculate to a 2- or 4-year college/university; and
 - 50% of Excel alumni will earn a BA/BS within 6 years of high school graduation.
- Network Goal I: Organizational Growth—Position the organization to successfully launch our high school in fall 2015.
 - Metrics:
 - By June 30, 2014, purchase real estate and launch construction of new high school facility;
 - Launch Capital Campaign; and
 - Secure charter consolidation approval from DESE.
- Network Goal II: Financial Management—Foster the financial health of the organization.
 - Metrics:
 - Manage organizational finances to align income and expenses with the 2013-2014 budget; and
 - Meet \$5 million fundraising target by July 1, 2014.
- Network Goal III: Human Capital—Attract and retain strong talent.
 - Metrics:
 - By July 1, 2014, fill 90% of school-based openings that recruitment director will have been informed of as of April 15, 2014; and
 - 90% of Excel employees will affirm their satisfaction with their employment experience at Excel over the previous six months.

Data is tracked against these goals on an annual basis and shared with staff members when possible. This data also helps to inform the Board of Trustees and the senior leadership team of the organization’s general health.

Network Content-Area Department Heads & Department Meetings

Prior to growth, Excel operated with a traditional department team structure. Each core content area was led by a department chair who was responsible for mentoring all members of the department and providing content-area specific guidance and coaching. In response to replication and in an effort to ensure that all students across the Excel network were being exposed to the same academically rigorous curriculum, Excel has adopted a network-wide department structure for the upcoming 2013-2014 school year. Not only will this new structure ensure that curriculum is consistent across all three campuses, but it will also increase the amount of content-area specific instructional coaching and feedback that staff members are receiving.

Under this new structure, each department in the network will be led by a Network-wide Department Head. Broadly speaking, the Network-wide Department Head is responsible for ensuring that his/her content area’s curriculum aligns with Common Core Standards and reflects the highest standards for achieving Excel’s mission. Specific duties of the Department Head include:

- Set and uphold the vision for the Excel approach to teaching English/Math/Science/Social Studies;



- Support curricular alignment for English/Math/Science/Social Studies across the Network
- Serve as the primary curricular resource for the Network's English/Math/Science/Social Studies Department;
- Manage the English/Math/Science/Social Studies Associate Teacher;
- Provide English/Math/Science/Social Studies teachers with on-going support and coaching in the development and execution of their curriculum; and
- Drive the professional development of the English/Math/Science/Social Studies Department.

As noted above, part of this new network-wide department structure includes the addition of content-area specific Associate Teachers to Excel's staffing model. These unique, full-time positions are meant to provide novice teachers with in-depth exposure to a specific content area, in turn preparing them to ultimately take on a core instructional role within the Excel network during an upcoming school year. Specific responsibilities of the Associate Teachers include:

- Serve as a Teaching Assistant in the classroom of the English/Math/Science/Social Studies Network-wide Department Head;
- Provide administrative support to the English/Math/Science/Social Studies Network-wide Department Head;
- Serve as a homeroom teacher; and
- Provide daily coverage and support.

Not only is the addition of Associate Teachers to our staffing model helpful in building a pipeline of qualified instructional candidates for the upcoming school year, but it also ensures that the Network-wide Department Head in turn has the opportunity to spend a significant portion of his/her time mentoring members of his/her department across all Excel campuses, designing academically aligned and rigorous curriculum, and documenting these best practices.

To ensure that staff members are meeting regularly with other members of their departments, the network will host network-wide department meetings roughly every three weeks on Friday afternoons. During these two-hour long sessions, members of the English/Math/Science/Social Studies departments will come together to discuss curriculum design, instructional best practices, and student achievement results. In addition, the Network-wide Department Heads will be responsible for observing all members their department at a minimum of once per quarter, ensuring that all staff members are receiving content-area specific feedback on their instruction.

It is our hope that by implementing this new network-wide department structure, we are creating an academically and instructionally aligned network of campuses in which all Excel students are exposed to the same level of rigorous content while all Excel staff members are provided with ongoing professional development and support.

Leadership Meetings

In addition to the regularly scheduled network-wide department meetings, members of Excel's senior leadership team across the network will also meet on a regular basis to discuss network-wide initiatives, trends, and goals. The school leaders of Excel's three campuses will gather in person with senior members of the Network Team on a monthly basis to discuss topics such as curricular alignment and professional development for instructional and non-instructional staff and analyze data and developing related next steps to be implemented at each school. These meetings will be facilitated by the network team's Managing Director of Network Programming. The Deans of Students at all three Excel schools will also meet on a quarterly basis. During these sessions, the Deans will discuss network-wide behavioral trends, share best practices, and strategize how to improve the network's character development and behavior management programming.



It is important to note that these senior leadership team and department team meetings will *not* replace the school-based department and grade level team meetings that have historically taken place at all three Excel campuses. These meetings will continue to take place, and the new gatherings will only further build upon the collaborative work environment we have created thus far.

c. Summarize financial forecasts for FY14 through FY18.

Excel has developed a long-term program-financial model with two goals in mind:

- Ensure our middle schools, once they are at full scale and the high school is open, are collectively sustainable, within \$20,000, on public funds. Financial projections (available on page 25) demonstrate that Excel will first accomplish this goal by FY16 and will maintain this sustainability at steady-state.
- Ensure the network, once the high school is at full scale and the middle school Graduate Services program is entirely phased out, is dependent on private fundraising of no more than \$672,000 per year or \$500 per enrolled student per year. The first year these two criteria (the high school is at full-scale & the middle school Graduate Services program is phased out) will be FY23. Financial projections (available on page 25) demonstrate that the organization will operate well within its maximum fundraising beginning in FY23. w

It is worth noting that Excel has tended to take a conservative approach to financial projections. Specifically, despite the fact that our middle school attrition is significantly lower, our high school financial projections assume annual attrition of 10 percent for 11th & 12th grade (the two grade levels at which we do not intend to backfill).

Recently, each of our middle schools has budgeted annual net losses. These budgeted losses are due to unique circumstances at each school:

- Excel Academy Charter School operates a Graduate Services program that provides services and support to nearly 400 Excel middle school graduates currently enrolled in high school and college or pursuing other professional goals such as military careers. This extraordinary expense will ultimately be absorbed by the high school's budget; the existence of the high school will eliminate the need for our middle schools to support students during their high school years (since they will be receiving significant support from the high school), and support of college-aged Excel graduates has been assumed in the high school's financial model. In addition, we are in the second year of a three-year plan to make strategic modifications to the staffing structure of our flagship school. These modifications were designed to reduce costs without negatively impacting program quality. Excel Academy Charter School will operate a program sustainable on public funds once the Graduate Services program at the middle school level is discontinued (i.e. after the last class of Excel graduates not eligible to attend the Excel high school has graduated from high school). Excluding the Graduate Services program expenses, Excel Academy Charter School will operate a program sustainable on public funds beginning in FY15.
- Excel Academy – Chelsea's budgeted deficits have been primarily due to start-up costs, but are also related to Chelsea's lower per-pupil tuition rates. The City of Chelsea spends approximately \$2,000 less per student than the City of Boston. Excel Academy – Chelsea's largest expenses — salaries, benefits, and facility costs — are equal to those of our Boston schools. Our organization has committed to offer the same quality of programming at Excel Academy – Chelsea as we offer at our other schools, despite the lower public revenues. The organization, therefore, has assumed that Excel Academy – Chelsea will, even at full-scale, run a deficit of \$500-\$600 per student.
- Excel Academy – Boston II's budgeted deficits are solely due to start-up expenses. Excel Academy – Boston II will be sustainable on public funds once it reaches full scale in FY16.

We are projecting the Excel high school will experience financial losses in its first several years of operation. The largest percentage of these losses will be due to real estate costs, specifically carrying costs associated with occupying a



full-scale facility for at least four years prior to full-scale enrollment. As noted previously and as demonstrated in the financial projections provided on page 25, once the high school is at full-scale and the middle school Graduate Services program is completely phased out (FY23), we are projecting the organization-wide program to be sustainable on public funds plus no more than \$500 of private revenue per enrolled student.

Excel is in the silent phase of a \$15 million campaign, of which \$9 million has already been pledged or is strongly anticipated. Funds raised through this campaign will support the organization through several critical growth years, support the acquisition and construction of a high school facility, and fund the continuation of the graduate services program until the services provided by that program can be absorbed by the high school.

Financial projections for the period of FY14 through FY23 are included in the appendix of this document.

d. Describe how the Board will increase efficiency related to the management and use of financial resources via consolidation.

As Excel's three current schools are chartered to serve students from multiple sending districts (Boston & Chelsea), the organization has taken great care to the extent required by our charters and state and federal laws and regulations to ensure resources from the City of Chelsea and the City of Boston are committed to the students those funds were intended to support. Being a regional charter school, Excel Academy Charter School is not required to maintain this segregation of funds. However, funding committed to Excel Academy – Chelsea (receiving funds almost exclusively from Chelsea, save for any students who move to another district after being enrolled) and Excel Academy – Boston II (receiving funds almost exclusively from Boston, save for any students who move to another district after being enrolled) must be kept completely separate, both relative to one another and relative to Excel Academy Charter School revenue. While we have been successful in our efforts to keep revenue separate, doing so has come at great cost, both in terms of time and financial expense.

Consolidation will allow the organization to manage revenue and expenses in a way similar to the process Excel Academy Charter School has done in its ten years of operation.

More specifically, consolidation will allow the school to more efficiently capitalize on economies of scale. Examples of potential economies of scale resulting from consolidation include:

- **Shared Staffing:** Consolidation would allow the organization to seamlessly hire staff members to provide services across multiple campuses without creating challenging financial reporting and accounting structures. If consolidation is approved, the organization is likely to more extensively share staff members working in the areas of operations and electives (i.e. art, health/fitness, technology).
- **Student Mobility:** If the organization's three schools were consolidated into a single charter, Excel would have flexibility to move students in ways that would better allow the organization to meet students' needs. For example, students might be assigned to campuses based on the proximity of their home to that campus thus resulting in a shorter commute for students and increased convenience for families. Likewise, consolidation would provide opportunities for specific campuses to specialize in certain types of academic programming, such as the most intensive English Language Learner education as well as sub-separate Special Education services. Excel has worked explicitly to attract applicants with special needs and who spoke a first language other than English, and as a result of these efforts, we are not only seeing an increase in these populations but also an increase in the number of high-needs students being enrolled through the lottery. Having the opportunity to move students with particular needs to a specific campus designed to best serve those needs is sure to not only bolster the quality of services provided but also to create the ever-important peer group that may otherwise be lacking. While there are many benefits to students and families created through consolidation, the flexibility to move students also creates financial benefits such as reduced transportation and staffing costs.



- Bulk Purchasing: Because each Excel school is a separate entity with a separate charter and tax identification number, several key vendors will not allow our schools to join together in bulk purchasing agreements that would otherwise result in significant cost savings across all of our schools. Consolidation would eliminate this barrier to bulk purchasing agreements.
- Accounting: The organization currently maintains separate accounting files for each school. Often, the network engages a vendor for a shared service such as network-wide professional development. In such cases, the organization must either pay the invoice through three separate checks (one from each school) or pay the invoice through one school's account and create a series of accounting entries to ensure a portion of the expense is appropriately allocated to each school. This process doubles, if not triples, the time spent paying these invoices. If the consolidation request is approved, campus-specific finances will continue to be kept separate (by using class distinctions in Quickbooks) for purposes of internal tracking and external reporting; but, accounting files will be consolidated into a single file thus streamlining the process for processing invoices from vendors shared across the network.
- Audit: Despite all schools operating in alignment with a shared set of fiscal policies and procedures, the organization must currently undergo separate audits for each of its schools. This nearly triples the amount of time allocated to the audit and nearly triples the organization's audit-related costs. Consolidation would result in a single school audit.

Finally, while not necessarily a financial benefit in and of itself, consolidation results in a degree of transparency currently lacking in Excel's current, three-school structure. As all schools in the organization are governed by a common Board of Trustees and managed and supported by a common Network Team, consolidation will more cleanly reflect the organization's shared governance and leadership structure.

e. Describe the school's facility and transportation plans for the consolidated charter school, the proposed campus configuration, and any changes or improvements to the transportation services as a result of consolidation.

Facilities: The facility needs and plans for Excel's three middle school campuses are unaffected by this consolidation request. Each school currently operates out of a facility that adequately and effectively meets the programmatic needs of its students and, in the case of Excel Academy – Chelsea and Excel Academy – Boston II, is sufficient for the schools' operations at full scale.

- In August 2012, Excel Academy Charter School moved into its permanent home, a 21,000 square foot facility in the heart of East Boston that is owned by the Excel Academy East Boston Realty Corporation and leased to the school.
- Excel Academy – Chelsea is in year three of a ten-year lease of 12,000 square feet of space in Chelsea; opportunities exist for further expansion and the lease includes early termination language that would allow the school to get out of the lease should a better option present.
- Excel Academy – Boston II is in year two of a five-year lease of 12,000 square feet of space in East Boston; the lease includes early termination language that will allow the school to get out of the lease. As described below, it is the organization's current intention to execute the school's early termination rights and relocate the school in a new facility that will also be built to house the high school.

For the high school, Excel intends to purchase and renovate a facility in East Boston of approximately 75,000 square feet that will ultimately house both Excel's high school as well as Excel Academy – Boston II. Over the past several months, we have made significant progress in our high school facility needs assessment and planning and most recently signed a letter of intent to purchase a property located at 413-419 Bremen Street in East Boston. A purchase & sale agreement for this property is currently under review by both parties' legal teams.

Transportation: The transportation plans for each existing Excel middle school will not be affected by this consolidation request. Specifically,



- Transportation for Boston residents to our East Boston campuses will be provided in accordance with Boston Public Schools' transportation policies and students' IEPs.
- Transportation for Chelsea residents to our East Boston campuses will be provided through school bus transportation contracted by Excel. If a student's IEP requires modifications to this procedure, those modifications will be made to address the student's unique needs.
- Transportation will not be provided to our Chelsea campus unless it is supported by Chelsea Public Schools' transportation policies and/or is dictated in a student's IEP.

Unless otherwise dictated in a student's IEP, transportation will be provided to Excel high school students according to the following procedures:

- Transportation for Boston residents to the high school will be provided in accordance with Boston Public Schools' transportation policies.
- Chelsea residents who attend the high school will receive an MBTA pass to facilitate their use of public transportation.

3. Network Structures and Other Affiliated Entities

a. Identify the existence of entities other than the Board of Trustees and the charter schools that may have a connection or relationship with Board of Trustees or schools within the network.

Excel Academy Charter School, Excel Academy – Chelsea, and Excel Academy – Boston II each hold a separate charter but are governed by the same 11-member Board of Trustees.

Friends of Excel Academy Charter Schools, Inc. is the 501c3 foundation established to raise funds to support all three existing Excel schools. Friends is managed by a five-person Board of Trustees. There is no overlap between the schools' Board of Trustees and the Friends' Board of Trustees.

The Excel Academy East Boston Realty Corporation is a 501c3 and a single-purpose entity established solely to own the property at 58 Moore Street in East Boston, the permanent home of Excel Academy Charter School. Three of the Realty Corporation's board members, as required by its articles of incorporation and bylaws, also sit on the Board of Trustees of Friends of Excel Academy Charter Schools, Inc.

Members of the Network Team are employees of Excel Academy Charter School. Excel Academy – Chelsea and Excel Academy – Boston II pay for Network Team services by way of a network contribution fee.

The organization is not affiliated with a management or school support organization and has no offshoot programs. No Board members have a financial interest in the schools or affiliated entities. School employees do not have a financial interest in any affiliated entities (and their only financial interest in the schools is related to their employment).

These existing structures and related relationships will not change as the result of consolidation.

4. Material Terms of the Charter to be Amended

a. School Name—State the official name of the proposed consolidated school if it will be different from the existing flagship school's name.

Excel proposes that the consolidated school take the name of the flagship school and be known, after consolidation, as Excel Academy Charter School. Its campuses would be known as Excel Academy Charter School – East Boston (flagship), Excel Academy Charter School – Chelsea (Chelsea), Excel Academy Charter School – Orient Heights (Boston II), and Excel Academy Charter High School.



b. Mission—(i.) Describe and explain any modifications to the mission statement of the proposed consolidated school from the mission of each of the existing schools, if applicable. (ii.) If applicable, indicate how unique aspects of the existing schools' missions will be maintained or eliminated under consolidation.

Every Excel Academy school operates with the same mission: to prepare students to succeed in high school and college, apply their learning to solve relevant problems, and engage productively in their communities.

This mission will not change as a result of consolidation.

c. Districts Specified in Charter—Indicate if the consolidation request includes a change to the districts specified in the charter of the flagship school.

The consolidation request will not include a change to the districts specified in the charter of the flagship school, Excel Academy Charter School. The consolidated school would be a regional school serving the communities of Boston and Chelsea.

d. Enrollment Policies and Admissions Applications—(i.) Describe and explain any modifications to the enrollment process of the proposed school, including the applications and lotteries for admission. Include a draft enrollment policy and application, if possible. (ii.) Explain how existing waitlists for each of the schools in the network will be impacted by the proposed consolidation. (iii.) Explain how the school will ensure open access for new students to the school's educational program at as many grade levels as possible.

Should the consolidation request be approved, Excel will hold a single lottery. Applicants will submit a single application, and on that application, they will rank, in order of preference, the Excel campuses at which they are open to enrolling.

During the lottery, Excel will pull names one-by-one. No students will be directly admitted the night of the lottery. Following the lottery, Excel will admit students to each school according to a) the order by which their names were pulled in the lottery, and b) the campus preferences they stated on their application. Families will be notified of their acceptance in accordance with the school's enrollment policy.

Excel schools do not maintain a waiting list from year to year. Students who are not admitted must reapply to be eligible for admission the following year. Therefore existing waitlists will not be impacted by consolidation.



Excel will ensure open access for new students by adhering to the following backfilling policies:

- If a student in grades 5-9 leaves the school between the first day of school and the last day of February, Excel will immediately enroll a new student to fill the seat.
- If a student in grades 5-9 leaves the school on or after March 1, Excel will fill the vacant seat at the beginning of the next school year.
- If a student in grade 10 leaves the school prior to the last day of February, Excel will fill the vacant seat immediately.
- If a student in grade 10 leaves the school on or after March 1, the seat will remain vacant.

A draft enrollment policy and application is included in the appendix.

e. Enrollment Growth Plans—(i.) Indicate, in a table, the distribution of students in the consolidated school by grade and the implementation timeline, projecting the enrollment pattern through full growth. (ii.) For requests that would result in a single regional school, explain how the anticipated proportion of student enrollment from the districts in the region may change under consolidation. (iii.) If a school in the network presently operates under an enrollment cap as a condition on its charter, discuss how this enrollment cap may impact some of the anticipated changes under consolidation.

In February 2013, BESE voted to approve the maximum student enrollment numbers at the three Excel schools

School	Approved Maximum Enrollment
Excel Academy Charter School	448 (maximum of 300 from Boston)
Excel Academy - Chelsea	448
Excel Academy – Boston II	448

As the chart on the next page details, under our charter consolidation we will, once all four schools are fully enrolled, have a total student body of 1,344 students, 672 students at the middle school level and a high school enrollment of 672. Each of our middle school campuses will enroll a total of 224 students while the Excel high school will enroll a total of 672. Total enrollment will be split between two school districts, with 748 seats being Boston seats and 596 seats being Chelsea seats.



	FY '13	FY '14	FY '15	FY '16	FY '17	FY '18	FY '19	FY '20	FY '21	FY '22
Excel Academy Charter School (flagship campus located in East Boston)										
5 th	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
6 th	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
7 th	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
8 th	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
Total	224	224	224	224	224	224	224	224	224	224
Excel Academy Charter School – Chelsea (2 nd replication campus located in Chelsea)										
5 th	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
6 th	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
7 th		56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
8 th			56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
Total	112	168	224	224	224	224	224	224	224	224
Excel Academy Charter School – Boston II (3 rd replication campus located in East Boston)										
5 th	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
6 th		56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
7 th			56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
8 th				56	56	56	56	56	56	56
Total	56	112	168	224	224	224	224	224	224	224
Excel Academy Charter High School (located in East Boston)										
9 th				112	168	168	168	168	168	168
10 th					112	168	168	168	168	168
11 th						112	168	168	168	168
12 th							112	168	168	168
Total				112	280	448	616	672	672	672
Consolidated Charter Totals										
Total MS	392	504	616	672	672	672	672	672	672	672
Total HS	0	0	0	112	280	448	616	672	672	672
Total Enroll	280	392	504	616	784	952	1,120	1,288	1,344	1,344



The following specific assumptions were used in developing the enrollment pattern projection:

- The proportion of Excel middle school students from Chelsea and Boston will not change as a result of this amendment request:
 - At Excel’s flagship school, we will assume that approximately 30% of students will come from Chelsea, and the remainder from Boston.
 - We continue to assume that all students at our Chelsea-based middle school campus will come from Chelsea.
 - We assume that all students at our second East Boston-based middle school campus will come from Boston.
- We plan to open the high school once two (Excel Academy Charter School and Excel Academy – Chelsea) of the three Excel middle school campuses have students matriculating to the 9th grade. This will happen for the first time in Fall 2015. The size of our entering 9th grade class will increase once the third Excel middle school (Excel – Boston II) is fully enrolled and has students prepared to matriculate to the 9th grade, which will happen in Fall 2016.
- We will “backfill” any seats vacated prior to February up through 10th grade. (Please see the *Enrollment* section above for further information.)
- We have deliberately not accounted for attrition in the above chart, which represents our maximum student enrollment projections (e.g. accounts for a guaranteed seat for each child enrolled through the 12th grade.) While we do anticipate that we are likely to have minimal attrition in the upper grades, we do not expect to have attrition rates similar to other public, charter and traditional, schools serving similar populations because:
 - Historically, our middle school attrition rate has been low (7% for the Network in 13-14) relative to our peers serving similar populations, and
 - Our backfilling policy is aggressive (e.g. backfilling through 10th grade) compared to other Boston charter high schools.

However, while we are not accounting for attrition in the upper grades at the high school level for the reasons detailed above, we have budgeted for attrition (which is explained in more detail on page 13 and exhibited in the financials on page 25) in our financial projections to reflect the conservative budgeting practices of the organization.

f. School Design—Summarize and explain the elimination or transfer of any aspect of school design unique to a single school within the network to a consolidated school.

In February 2010, BESE approved the Excel Board of Trustees to establish two new charter schools modeled after its successful flagship school, Excel Academy Charter School. The Excel Board now operates three middle schools, all which share key distinctions that define an Excel education:

Culture of high expectations: All members of the school community are held to the highest expectations. A comprehensive behavior management system creates a safe and orderly environment where learning can thrive. An embedded character education program supports students in internalizing our expectations and as result, our students develop an ethical code that guides their actions both inside and outside of the school building.



Rigorous academics and student supports: All students are exposed to a college-preparatory academic program through a curriculum with a unique balance of targeted remediation and higher order critical thinking. We identify all the reasons why a student may not be academically successful and provide targeted supports to meet the unique and diverse needs of our students.

Investment in talent: We recruit and retain highly qualified teachers with both the will and skill to execute our educational program. We recognize that the culture we create for the adults in the building is of equal importance to that which we have built for the student body. As such, we invest significant resources in building the profession of teaching and supporting staff in perfecting their practice. Staff members take ownership of their core functions and do whatever it takes to achieve the school's mission.

Systems of operating procedures: We identify, down to the minute, how to maximize the productivity of the school and develop and execute comprehensive systems of procedures to ensure the efficacy, efficiency, and effectiveness of our program. Procedures are precisely and consistently applied by every member of the community; because of this consistency, our procedures enable us to achieve the intended outcomes.

These four pillars are core to Excel's school design and will not be compromised and/or modified as a result of consolidation at the middle school level.

This consolidation request, if approved, will have a positive impact on our school design for a single site high school. We believe that a single site high school which will serve as a "feeder" for all three Excel middle schools will enable us to faithfully implement these four pillars at the Excel high school. We do recognize that there will inevitably be some differences in running a moderately larger high school program. We believe these differences will be programmatic benefits and will be consistent with our operating model. Specifically, we anticipate the following differences:

- A larger high school brings the benefits of scale, in terms of resources and opportunities, to offer a broader range of elective and extra-curricular offerings. These program enhancements — such as debate team, Model UN, and language clubs — will further advance the core curriculum. These types of offerings will be modeled after the successful Enrichment Program employed at our middle schools, which is critical to providing additional learning opportunities in advancing the intellectual joy of our students.
- We will employ the same staffing formula of students-to-teachers-to-administrators as defined by our operating model. However, with a larger school, this may involve splitting certain roles into lower and upper (i.e., 9th /10th grade and 11th /12th grade) school positions and taking other approaches to have a more specialized deployment of staff. For example, we believe that the effectiveness of a Dean of Students (the chief disciplinarian and culture "promoter, upholder and enforcer") is driven by that individual's ability to build and maintain meaningful personal relationships with students. To maximize the effectiveness of this position, we may choose to split the role into two positions with a Lower School and Upper School Dean of Students. This structure will allow the Deans to have a manageable student caseload that lends itself to stronger relationships with individual students. Modifications to the staffing structure such as this will be possible due to the benefits of scale – e.g., a larger student body results in a larger tuition base.

g. Board Bylaws—Summarize any changes to the bylaws as a result of consolidation.

As previously stated, we do not foresee the need for any significant changes to Excel's organizational structure, board decision-making processes, or board membership as a result of charter consolidation. Hence, we also do not foresee any significant changes and/or modifications will be required to the Board Bylaws as a result of charter consolidation.



The Board of Trustees will engage legal counsel to make recommendations, and as deemed necessary, make any changes to the Board Bylaws to reflect the charter consolidation. We believe these changes will be modest in nature – defining the distinction between the “charter” and “school campus,” defining the Board’s oversight authority over a single school campus, and defining the reporting structures between the Board, CEO and individual school leaders.



5. Consolidation Action Plan

The following is an Action Plan that outlines the specific tasks, point person, and start/completion dates for the key actions that will be taken as a result of the charter consolidation.

Action	Point Person	Start Date	Completion Date
<i>Governance and Legal Status</i>			
Revise by-laws and other governing documents to reflect legal status	CEO	Approval	June 2014
Engage attorney to advise on changes, and take necessary actions, to be made with IRS, Secretary of State and other regulatory agencies.	CEO	Approval	June 2014
Engage attorney to advise on any closure actions required to dissolve two charters.	CEO	Approval	June 2014
Develop protocols for the accountability and reporting to the board of individual school campuses	CEO	June 2014	August 2014
Revise the accountability plan to ensure accurate tracking of specific cohorts of students' performance, both at individual campuses and charter-wide.	MD of Network Operations	June 2014	August 2014
<i>Finance</i>			
Engage auditor to advise on any changes, and take necessary actions, to consolidate financial accounting, including chart of accounts and fiscal policies and procedures	MD of Network Operations	Approval	June 2014
Make any necessary changes to bank accounts	MD of Network Operations	Approval	June 2014
Revise fiscal policies & procedures to reflect charter consolidation	MD of Network Operations	Approval	June 2014
Create system to track inter-campus loans of materials	MD of Network Operations	June 2014	August 2014
<i>Human Resources</i>			
Make any necessary changes to payroll to reflect charter consolidation	MD of Network Operations	June 2014	August 2014
Make any necessary changes to MTRS enrollment to reflect consolidation	MD of Network Operations	June 2014	August 2014
Update employee handbook and other guiding documents to reflect charter consolidation	MD of Network Operations	July 2014	August 2014
<i>Vendor and Contract Relations</i>			
Notify vendors, lessors, insurers, benefit providers and contractors of charter consolidation and make any necessary	MD of Network Operations	July 2014	August 2014



changes to contractual agreements and/or policies			
Create protocols for the engagement of vendors at a single school site and among multiple schools	MD of Network Operations	August 2014	September 2014
Review all existing contractual relations to investigate any potential economies of scale under a single school charter	MD of Network Operations	July 2014	August 2014
<i>Marketing and Family Relations</i>			
Notify families and community of charter consolidation	CEO	Approval	Two weeks after approval
Develop protocols for external relations of individual school campuses	MD of Strategic Growth and Development	July 2014	August 2014
Revise all marketing materials include print media and website to reflect charter consolidation	MD of Strategic Growth and Development	Approval	August 2014
<i>Student Recruitment and Enrollment</i>			
Revise enrollment policies and procedures to include revised protocol for school assignment, backfilling, waitlist maintenance, admitting students from the waitlist, and staying within district enrollment caps	MD of Network Operations	Approval	March 2014
Revise all student recruitment materials to include explanations of revised enrollment process	MD of Network Operations	Approval	March 2014
<i>Friends of Excel Academy Charter Schools, Inc.</i>			
Revise by-laws and other governing documents to reflect consolidation	MD of Network Operations	Approval	August 2014
Revise loan and real estate documents to reflect consolidation	MD of Network Operations	Approval	August 2014



Appendix

FY14-FY23 Financial Projections

	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
Excel Academy Charter School (flagship)	(181,428)	9,265	16,446	(6,624)	(7,937)	(2,459)	3,419	9,712	16,436	23,609
Excel Academy Charter School-Chelsea	(232,828)	(91,962)	(83,564)	(132,833)	(135,488)	(135,631)	(135,561)	(135,267)	(134,740)	(133,970)
Excel Academy Charter School-Boston II	(135,165)	(35,119)	112,844	120,151	123,207	134,826	147,040	159,870	173,340	187,471
Middle School Net Income/Loss	(549,421)	(117,815)	45,725	(19,307)	(20,219)	(3,265)	14,898	34,315	55,036	77,110
High School Net Income/Loss	(3,000,000)	-	(2,040,247)	(1,330,610)	(1,294,846)	(582,422)	(384,169)	(380,538)	(305,211)	(228,165)
Network Team Net Income/Loss	(942,225)	(1,013,171)	(810,408)	(680,759)	(553,581)	(421,277)	(394,232)	(402,699)	(411,353)	(420,199)
Graduate Services Program Net Income/Loss	(355,074)	(310,029)	(319,092)	(252,871)	(213,559)	(179,126)	(183,961)	(94,336)	(97,166)	-
Organization Operating Net Income/Loss	(4,846,720)	(1,441,015)	(3,124,022)	(2,283,547)	(2,082,205)	(1,186,090)	(947,464)	(843,258)	(758,695)	(571,254)
Fundraising-Committed/Strongly Anticipated	3,760,000	1,745,000	1,730,000	870,000	945,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	-	-
Organization Total Net Income/Loss (Remaining Fundraising Need)	(1,086,720)	303,985	(1,394,022)	(1,413,547)	(1,137,205)	(1,086,090)	(847,464)	(743,258)	(758,695)	(571,254)



Draft Enrollment Policy

Section 1: Enrollment Overview

1.1: Pursuant to its charter, Excel Academy Charter School (the School) serves students in the 5th-12th grades.

1.2: As a public charter school, Excel Academy Charter School is free of charge to all families. The school is open to students from all MA school districts.¹ Any student who meets the following criteria is eligible to apply:

- The student must be a resident of Massachusetts at the time of application.²
- The student will have successfully completed the grade preceding the grade to which he/she is applying.³

1.3: The School has and implements a student recruitment and retention plan. The School does not require potential students or their families to attend interviews or informational meetings as a condition of enrollment. The School does not administer admissions tests to potential applicants or predicate enrollment on results from any test of ability or achievement. The School does not require dual parent/guardian signatures on the application.

1.4: Applications are available on the School's website (www.excelacademy.org) and at every Excel Academy Charter School campus beginning in mid-December. Applications for students who wish to be considered for the initial lottery must arrive at an Excel Academy Charter School campus no later than 4:00 p.m. on the last business day of February. Applications can be submitted online through the school's website, via e-mail or fax, or in person. Public notice of subsequent deadlines will be posted on the School's website at least one month in advance. Students admitted as a result of the first lottery must accept enrollment by 4:00pm on April 10th, or in the case that April 10th falls on a weekend or holiday, the business day immediately prior.

1.5: The number of available seats at each grade level is determined by the School's enrollment policy as described below. If the number of applicants who satisfy the eligibility criteria for a particular grade level exceeds the number of available seats at that grade level, an initial public lottery is held at one of the Excel Academy Charter School campuses.

1.6: All lotteries are held at an Excel Academy Charter School campus. Applicants are notified of the lottery's location and time at least one week in advance. A disinterested individual that is not connected to the School draws names during the lottery. During the lottery, Excel pulls names one-by-one. No students are directly admitted on the night of the lottery. Following the lottery, Excel admits students to each campus according to a) the order by which their

¹ *Excel Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in the English language or a foreign language, or prior academic achievement. All information requested in the application and/or enrollment materials, such as language spoken at home or race/ethnicity, is intended for data collection or student support purposes only and will not be used to discriminate.*

² *Families must be willing to show proof of residence at any time during the application process except in the case of homelessness. Families will be required to show proof of residence prior to admission except in the case of homelessness. Proof of residence is determined by a family's ability to provide two documents (i.e. lease, utility bill, driver's license) that include the name and address of the child's parent/guardian. Both documents must show the same name and address to be considered valid.*

³ *Families must be willing to show evidence of the applicant's successful completion of the grade preceding the grade to which s/he has accepted admission upon enrollment.*



names are pulled in the lottery, and b) the campus preferences they stated on their application. This process is completed within one week of the lottery and results are reported to admitted students' and waitlisted students' families within two weeks of the initial lottery. In the case where the number of applicants at a particular grade level exceeds the number of available seats at the grade level, a waiting list is created.

1.7: Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis through September 1st of each school year. Applications received after a lottery deadline has passed are included in the next lottery. Even if a waiting list already exists after the first lottery, the School is likely to hold at least two additional lotteries (with one being held in early August and the other being held in late September) to ensure all applicants have the opportunity to participate in the lottery process; in the case where a waiting list exists after the first lottery, inclusion in subsequent lotteries will result in applicants being added to the waitlist. If the principal enrollment process fails to produce an adequate number of enrolled students, the lottery process may be repeated if a waiting list does not exist and the required lottery process is strictly followed, including public notification and deadlines.

1.8: Applications are only valid for the school year listed on the application. Students who are not admitted must reapply each year. Students who are admitted and complete the year are automatically enrolled the following year unless a family indicates their child is withdrawing from the program.

1.9: It is the applicant's family's responsibility to confirm that the school has received the student's application prior to the application deadline.

Section 2: Enrollment Policy & Procedures

2.1: If an applicant fails to meet the application criteria mentioned above (Massachusetts residency at time of application and completion of prior grade in advance of enrollment at Excel), s/he may become ineligible to apply, and, if already enrolled, may lose her/his seat. An application containing false or inaccurate information may be considered void.

2.2: Excel Academy Charter School grants enrollment preference to students whose siblings are currently enrolled at Excel Academy and then to students who reside in Boston or Chelsea regardless of the lottery through which they are selected. As the school runs multiple lotteries each year, this means that a student from Boston or Chelsea whose name is drawn in the second lottery will be placed on the waiting list ahead of a student residing outside of Boston or Chelsea who is selected in the first lottery.

Students will receive enrollment preference in the following order:

- 1) Siblings of current Excel Academy students
- 2) Boston & Chelsea residents included in the first lottery
- 3) Boston & Chelsea residents included in the second lottery
- 4) Boston & Chelsea residents included in the third lottery
- 5) Students residing in communities other than Boston & Chelsea included in the first lottery
- 6) Students residing in communities other than Boston & Chelsea included in the second lottery
- 7) Students residing in communities other than Boston & Chelsea included in the third lottery



2.3: The number of students enrolled in each grade level during each academic year is determined by the following criteria:

- **2.3.A:** 5th-9th Grades
 - The School will determine each year the number of 5th-9th grade students it will admit through its lottery.
 - If a 5th-9th grade student leaves Excel Academy Charter School between the first day of school and February 15 of each academic year, a new student will be admitted, as determined by the School's existing waitlist, in place of the exiting student.
 - If a 5th-9th grade student leaves Excel Academy Charter School between February 16 and the last day of school of each academic year, the seat will remain vacant until the following school year. The vacant seat will be filled, via the enrollment lottery conducted that Spring as a seat in the next grade.
- **2.3.B:** 10th Grade
 - The School will determine each year the number of 10th grade students it will admit through its lottery.
 - If a 10th grade student leaves Excel Academy Charter School between the first day of school and February 15 of each academic year, a new student will be admitted, as determined by the School's existing waitlist, in place of the exiting student.
 - If a 10th grade student leaves the school on or after March 1, the seat will remain vacant.
- **2.3.C:** 11th & 12th Grades
 - The school is unlikely to enroll students in the 11th or 12th grades.
 - If an 11th or 12th grade student leaves Excel Academy Charter School, the seat will remain vacant.
- **2.3.D:** Waiting Lists
 - In the case where the number of applicants at a particular grade level exceeds the number of available seats at that grade level, a waiting list is created. All applicants not selected in an enrollment lottery are placed on the waiting list in the order the names were selected while also taking into account sibling and resident preferences.
 - If a student withdraws from Excel Academy Charter School or declines admission, the seat may be filled in accordance with the policy outlined above. In the case that the policy requires the seat to be filled, the next available student on the waitlist for the relevant grade will be offered admission. This process will continue until the vacant seat is filled.
 - No student will be admitted ahead of other eligible students on the waiting list unless said student is either a sibling of a currently attending student or a resident of Boston or Chelsea.
 - The school does not maintain a waiting list from year to year. Students who are not admitted must reapply to be eligible for admission the following year.

2.4: We will also follow these procedures:

- **2.4.A.:** Excel Academy Charter School will keep accurate records of its waiting list containing the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, and grade levels of students who entered the lottery but did not gain admission.
- **2.4.B.:** Once an application is submitted, it is the family's responsibility to notify the school of any changes to the information provided on the application (i.e. contact information).



- **2.4.C.:** If any of the information supplied through the application is factually inaccurate (i.e. the application says the student is going into 5th grade but he/she is actually going into 6th grade), the application is considered void unless it is corrected by 4:00pm on the day before the lottery.
- **2.4.D.:** At the parent/guardian's request, Excel Academy Charter School will not disclose student information acquired through the application process. Parents/guardians of applicants have the opportunity to consent or deny disclosure of student information, including public announcement of a child's name during the public lottery; forms to indicate consent or denial will be made available to the families of applicants upon request.
- **2.4.F.:** Upon request, the School will provide the names and addresses of students to a third party mail house for mailings unless the parent requests that the School withhold their child's information.
- **2.4.G:** If a student withdraws from Excel Academy Charter School, declines admission or declines to remain on the waiting list, the student must reapply to be eligible for future enrollment.

Section 3: Enrollment Cap

The state has imposed a statutory limit on the number of students that can enroll in charter schools from a given school district. Each year, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) reports the number of "seats" remaining under this cap. Those students for whom enrollment in Excel Academy Charter School would cause the sending district to exceed their tuition cap will not be offered admission but will remain on the waiting list. If those students are siblings of students currently in attendance at the school, the state may pay the child's tuition, subject to appropriation.

Section 4: Enrollment for Grades above Lowest Grade Offered

Given that curriculum varies from school to school, students initially accepted into any grade other than 5th grade may be required to take a diagnostic exam prior to the start of school. Diagnostic exams do not affect admission but may affect grade level placement. Excel Academy Charter School uses the diagnostic exam – in conjunction with prior school performance records – to determine whether the student should repeat the current grade. Students who pass the diagnostic exam are automatically placed into the grade level for which they applied. Students who do not pass the diagnostic exam may be placed in the grade level for which they applied; however, if prior school performance records coupled with a failing diagnostic exam score gives the school cause to believe a student is not prepared to succeed at the grade level for which he/she applied, the student may be offered a seat at the grade level below that for which he/she applied. Moreover, all students accepted into any grade other than 5th grade may be required to attend a summer session that may include academic instruction and orientation. Students accepted into the 5th grade are guaranteed a seat in the 5th grade (assuming the student will have successfully completed the 4th grade) and diagnostic testing will not be used for grade level placement of these students.



Draft Enrollment Application



Excel Academy is a network of tuition-free, public charter schools in Chelsea & East Boston, MA. All students are enrolled through an open lottery. Thus, ALL students, regardless of academic performance, are welcome to apply! The first application deadline is February 28, 2014 at 4:00 P.M.

Excel Academy Charter School is currently accepting applications for 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grades for the 2014-2015 school year for students meeting the following criteria:

- 1) The student is a resident of Massachusetts. Note: Preference will be given to siblings of current students and to students from Boston and Chelsea.
2) Prior to August 2014, the student will have successfully completed the 4th, 5th, 6th or 7th grade.

Grade for 2014-2015: [] 5th [] 6th [] 7th [] 8th

Campus Preference: Excel Academy has three middle school campuses. You have the option to rank the campus choices in order of preference. Please note that ranking the campuses by preference does not guarantee your child will be placed in the campus you indicate. The Excel Academy middle school campuses are:

Excel Academy-East Boston
58 Moore Street
East Boston, MA 02128

Excel Academy-Chelsea
180 2nd Street
Chelsea, MA 02150

Excel Academy-Orient Heights
1150 Saratoga Street
East Boston, MA 02128
*serving 5th-7th grades only in 2014-15

My first choice campus is: [] Excel-East Boston [] Excel-Chelsea [] Excel-Orient Heights
My second choice campus is: [] Excel-East Boston [] Excel-Chelsea [] Excel-Orient Heights
My third choice campus is: [] Excel-East Boston [] Excel-Chelsea [] Excel-Orient Heights

Student Information

Student First Name: _____ Middle: _____ Last: _____
Male [] Female [] Current Grade: _____ Date of Birth: ____/____/____ Child's Phone Number: (____)____-____
Child's Home Address: _____ City: _____ State: MA Zip: _____
Current School: _____ City of School: _____
Parent/Guardian Name: First _____ Last _____ Lives w/ child: Yes [] No []
Work Number: (____)____-____ Cell Number:(____)____-____ E-mail: _____
Parent/Guardian Name: First _____ Last _____ Lives w/ child: Yes [] No []
Work Number: (____)____-____ Cell Number:(____)____-____ E-mail: _____

Please indicate whether the applicant's sibling is already enrolled at Excel or applying for Fall of 2013. Each child needs to submit a separate application.

_____ [] Applying for Fall '13 [] Already enrolled at Excel-East Boston
Name _____ Grade 2012-13
How did you hear about us? [] Direct Mailing [] Newspaper, TV, or radio [] Flyer/sign [] Community Center: _____
[] Referred by: _____ [] Other (please specify): _____

Interested families should complete and submit an application for each child in person or by mail to one of the campuses listed above. For further information, please contact Excel Academy by email at enroll@excelacademy.org or by phone at 617-874-4080 ext. 5044 or visit us on the web at www.excelacademy.org

Excel Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in the English language or a foreign language, or prior academic achievement. *It is the family's responsibility to notify Excel-East Boston of changes to addresses and phone numbers. *It is the family's responsibility to notify us of any changes to the information, including contact information, provided on the application. *If any information provided is factually inaccurate, the application is considered void unless corrected by 4:00 PM the day prior to the lottery. *Students admitted from Excel-East Boston's waiting list have 48 hours to respond to our phone call and claim a seat. *This application is for 2013-2014; students who are not admitted must reapply each year. *It is the family's responsibility to confirm that Excel-East Boston has received this application by the deadline. *This is an application for Excel-East Boston only; separate applications must be submitted for a student to be included in the Excel-Chelsea and Excel-Orient Heights lotteries.