# Proposed Innovators Charter School Executive Summary

*This was prepared by the Innovators Charter School applicant group.*

**The Mission.** Innovators Charter School provides a rigorous wall-to-wall early college STEM education for historically underrepresented students in grades 6-12 from the Gateway Cities of Fall River and New Bedford. Our learners graduate with the mindset, content knowledge, curiosity and wayfinding abilities necessary to persist through their post-secondary education and successfully enter the 21st century workforce.

**The Vision.** Innovators Charter School (ICS) puts the science of learning and development into action. Schools largely remain institutions built upon historical practices and dated assumptions about student learning and educator development. The scientific knowledge about brain structure and development, combined with research on cognition, motivation, identity, and individual variability, presents an opportunity to challenge the traditional norms and structures of secondary schools. Innovators Charter School takes what we now know about adolescent development and merges it with conditions that support learning.

**The Need**. Innovators Charter School’s early college STEM model provides students from the regions of New Bedford and Fall River an opportunity for *economic mobility* through high value STEM careers. Adjusted for population, Massachusetts has more demand for STEM jobs than almost every other state. More than 40 percent of all employment in the Commonwealth revolves around innovation industries such as clean energy, information technology, defense and advanced manufacturing. In addition, the enrollment and persistence gaps in post-secondary education have, on average, doubled between the South Coast anchor districts that ICS will serve and the state. The ICS model will provide early college access to all students, allowing them to literally picture themselves succeeding in college, and accumulating free college credits while they are in high school.

**The School**. Innovators Charter School is a regional Commonwealth Charter School serving 735 students in grades 6-12. Opening in September 2022, ICS will enroll 315 students in grades 6-8, growing by one grade level each year until we reach capacity during our fifth year. Students engage in a curriculum reflecting our key design principles of adolescent development, deeper learning, and early college STEM. *We are the region’s only wall-to-wall early college*. During middle school, students engage in career exploration, exposure, and engagement activities. High school students enroll in one of three articulated career pathways focused on Engineering, Computer Science, or Biomedical. Innovators Charter School works with Bristol Community College, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, and Landmark College to provide *all* ICS students with early college experiences, career pathways, and college credits. All students graduate with a minimum of 12 and up to 60 college credits.

**Key Design Elements**. Innovators Charter School is founded on an educational philosophy that identifies the unique and untapped potential of every student to grow and thrive in a rigorous academic STEM environment with a team of dedicated educators who guide each of our students to excel through a rigorous and relevant curriculum. We believe in supporting all students’ journeys to enroll and succeed in higher education, particularly those students who are traditionally underrepresented, as a means to experience economic mobility and prosperity. We manifest our educational philosophy in our three key design elements which serve as the foundation of our model: The Science of Adolescent Development, Deeper Learning, and Early College focused on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

**Communities to be Served**. Increased graduation rates over the past five years have not translated into higher rates of post-secondary enrollment or persistence for the districts of Fall River and New Bedford. In fact, both communities have among the lowest postsecondary enrollment and persistence rates in the Commonwealth. And, economically disadvantaged students in these Gateway Cities are significantly less likely to both enroll and persist in post-secondary education compared to non-economically disadvantaged peers**.** ICS provides the region’s first wall-to-wall early college STEM model where students build a strong foundation in the middle grades and progress to articulated pathways aligned with college partners. During middle school, students engage in career exploration, exposure, and engagement activities. All ICS students engage in instruction grounded in the principles of deeper learning as articulated by the MyWays™ framework. This instructional model affords ICS students the opportunity to master core content knowledge and communicate their ideas effectively, think creatively, work collaboratively, and manage their own learning. All students have access to acceleration blocks to support their mastery of core content. ICS works with Bristol Community College, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth and Landmark College to provide *all* ICS students with early college experiences, career pathways, and college credits.