

IDAHO PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

Date: Thursday, October 9, 2025

Start Time: 9:00 AM, MST

Physical Location: Capitol Mall Annex, Senate Conference Room, Third Floor, 514 W. Jefferson Street, Boise, Idaho 83702

Live Stream: <https://www.youtube.com/@IPCSC>

- I. COMMISSION WORK (Action Item)**
 - A. August 14, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes Review / Approval
- II. DIRECTOR'S REPORT**
- III. CONSIDERATION OF CHARTER AUTHORIZER TRANSFER (Action Item)**
 - A. Gem Prep: Online
- IV. CONSIDERATION OF NEW CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION (Action Item)**
 - A. Elevate Kuna
- V. CHARTER SCHOOL REPORT**
 - A. Chief Tahgee Elementary Academy
- VI. 2026 COMMISSION MEETING DATES (Action Item)**
- VII. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS (Action Item)**
 - A. Finance Committee
 - B. Strategic Planning Committee
 - C. Application and Policy Committee
 - D. Renewal and Performance Committee
- VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT**
 - A. Public comment will be limited to three minutes per person. To submit written comment please email to pcsc@osbe.idaho.gov before 5:00 pm MST on Wednesday, October 8, 2025.
- IX. ADJOURN**

MEETING MINUTES FOR REGULAR MEETING

Date: Thursday, August 14, 2025

Start Time: 9:00 AM, MST

Physical Location: Capitol Mall Annex, Senate Conference Room, Third Floor, 514 W. Jefferson Street, Boise, Idaho 83702

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Reed at 9:00am.

Commissioners Present:	Staff Present:
Chairman Reed - Present	Interim Acting Director Jennifer White, OSBE
Vice Chair Bair - Present	Jared Dawson, IPCSC
Commissioner Koehler - Present	Joy Lindner, IPCSC
Commissioner Hedrick - Present	Lisa Hendricks, OSBE
Commissioner Quinn - Present	
Commissioner Amador - Present	
Commissioner Paulos - Present	

Karen Sheehan from the Attorney General's Office was also present.

I. COMMISSION WORK (Action Item)

Minutes Review / Approval

Motion/Second (Hedrick/Koehler) Motion to approve the minutes from the June 12, 2025 Regular Commission Meeting and August 5, 2025 Special Commission Meeting as presented. *The motion passed unanimously.*

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

No verbal public comment was given. IPCSC received several public comments via email which were shared with Commissioners expressing support for both finalists for the Executive Director position and support for Brabeion Academy.

III. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Interim Acting Director White has been working with HR on open positions in the IPCSC office. She noted the Public Charter School Approval Criteria included in the meeting materials. Several charter schools have been invited to participate in the increased charter school support program this year: Chief Tahgee Elementary Academy, Hayden Canyon Charter School, Monticello Montessori Charter School, and North Valley Academy, along with three schools from Cohort One that will continue in the program: Blackfoot Community Charter, Mountain Community School, and Peace Valley Charter School. Bingham Academy is in the process of closing. A new charter school application from Elevate Kuna has been received.

IV. EXECUTIVE SESSION (Action Item)

Motion/Second (Hedrick/Koehler) Motion to enter into executive session pursuant to Idaho Code 74-206(1)(a) to consider hiring a public officer, employee, staff member or

individual agent, wherein the respective qualities of individuals are to be evaluated in order to fill a particular vacancy or need. Topic: Director Position.

Roll Call: Chair Reed: yes, Vice Chair Bair: yes, Commissioner Amador: yes, Commissioner Hedrick: yes, Commissioner Koehler: yes, Commissioner Paulos: yes, Commissioner Quinn: yes. *The motion passed unanimously.*

Motion/Second (Paulos/Bair) Motion to exit executive session. *The motion passed unanimously.*

V. CONSIDERATION OF AMENDMENT TO PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE (Action Item)

Interim Acting Director White summarized Project Impact STEM Academy's request to amend their primary attendance area.

Motion/Second (Quinn/Koehler) Motion to allow Project Impact STEM Academy to change the boundaries of the school's primary attendance area. *The motion passed unanimously.*

VI. CONSIDERATION OF CHARTER AUTHORIZER TRANSFER (Action Item)

Gem Prep: Online Chief Executive Officer Jason Bransford, Chief Academic Officer Laurie Wolfe, Chief Financial Officer Bryan Fletcher, Principal Heather McKenna, and Federal Programs Director and Assistant Principal Kyle Leybas gave a presentation requesting charter authorizer transfer from the White Pine School District to the IPCSC.

No motion was made. The decision was tabled until the October 9, 2025 meeting in order for the school to gather information to enable the Commissioners to make a decision as to whether to grant a 6 year or 12 year charter.

VII. CONSIDERATION OF NEW CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION (Action Item)

Brabeion Academy Board Chair Branden Durst, Board Vice Chair and Treasurer Tom Moore, Board Secretary Julie Dillehay, Board President Miguel DeLuna, and Director Laura Warden gave a presentation.

Motion/Second (Hedrick/Koehler) Motion to approve the new charter school application for Brabeion Academy for a three-year term effective August 14, 2025 with the following conditions:

1. Charter holder provides the IPCSC evidence that a Facility Lease agreement is signed or otherwise delivered by March 1, 2026;
2. Charter holder provides the IPCSC evidence of a balanced year 1 budget based on enrollment from the Spring 2026 lottery by June 1, 2026;
3. Charter holder provides the IPCSC evidence that all Memorandum(s) of Understanding required to operate the school are signed or otherwise delivered by June 1, 2026;
4. Charter holder provides the IPCSC evidence that all grants and contracts that are part of that year 1 budget are signed or otherwise delivered by June 1, 2026; and
5. Charter holder provides the IPCSC evidence that sufficient transportation has been secured by June 1, 2026, to the extent holder intends to provide transportation.

The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. APPROVAL OF NEW DIRECTOR (Action Item)

Motion/Second (Bair/Paulos) Motion to appoint Rachel Burk Executive Director of the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, delegating authority to Chairman Reed and Interim Acting Director White and to determine start date and salary and benefits in conjunction with HR. Commissioner Amador recused himself from the vote. *The motion passed unanimously.*

IX. IDAHO SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION PRESENTATION

ISBA Executive Director Misty Swanson and Chief Learning Officer Phil Gore gave a presentation, highlighting ISBA's Gem State Governance Board Development Series.

Meeting adjourned.

II. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Rachel Burk, IPCSC Director

III. CONSIDERATION OF CHARTER AUTHORIZER TRANSFER:

Gem Prep: Online

BASIS

Pursuant to Idaho Code 33-5209A:

TRANSFER OF CHARTER. (1) A charter may be transferred to, and placed under the chartering authority of, any authorizer if the receiving authorizer and the charter holder agree to such transfer. The receiving authorizer and charter holder may agree to revisions to the charter and performance certificate as required by such transfer.

BACKGROUND

On May 20, 2025, Gem Prep: Online (GPO) submitted an application transfer from the White Pine School District to the Idaho Public Charter School Commission portfolio, seeking alignment with the Commission's authorizing practices. The application is available online with the August 14 Commission Materials at "[Gem Prep Online Charter Petition Submission](#)."

GPO has operated since 2006 and proposes to serve statewide virtual students in grades K-12 using Canvas as a Learning Management System (LMS). GPO has an existing 12-year charter term and requests a K-12 enrollment cap of 1,000, with a target enrollment of 574 students to allow for flexibility around enrollment. The application articulates the mission of preparing students for college through rigorous academics, data-driven academic instruction and adaptive technology. GPO is currently exceeding all academic and financial measures of the IPCSC framework based on FY24 data and an independent audit.

On August 14, 2025, the IPCSC did not make a motion to either approve or deny the transfer application and directed the school to provide additional information to IPCSC staff to determine whether a six- or twelve-year approval was appropriate based upon previous financial and operational data during the school's previous performance certificate term with its current authorizer.

IPCSC staff reviewed documentation submitted by the applicants for FY21-24, and it appears that Gem Prep: Online received a Meets Standard or Exceeds Standard rating in all applicable categories during the previous performance certificate term.

The proposed transfer to IPCSC chartering authority will be effective July 1, 2026.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff analysis is available as Attachment III.B. Pursuant to that analysis, the staff recommends approving the application for transfer. Conditions, if any, fall within the discretion of the Commission.

SPEAKERS

Jason Bransford, Chief Executive Officer

Laurie Wolfe, Chief Academic Officer

Bryan Fletcher, Chief Financial Officer

Heather McKenna, Principal

Kyle Leybas, Assistant Principal

Josh Femreite, Chief Growth Officer

COMMISSION ACTION

1. A motion to approve the authorizer transfer application for Gem Prep: Online for either a six- or twelve-year term effective July 1, 2026.
OR
2. A motion to approve the authorizer transfer application for Gem Prep: Online for either a six- or twelve-year term effective July 1, 2026 with the following conditions: [state conditions and due dates].
OR
3. A motion to deny the authorizer transfer application for Gem Prep: Online on the following grounds: [state reasons for denial].

ATTACHMENT III.A

The application is available at <https://chartercommission.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/GPO-FINAL-COMMISSION-RESUBMIT-6-26-25.pdf>.

ATTACHMENT III.B.



Application Evaluation Report

Gem Prep: Online

July 31st, 2025

Idaho Public Charter School Commission

514 W. Jefferson Street, Suite 303

Boise, Idaho 83702

Phone: (208)332-1561

pcsc@osbe.idaho.gov

Alan Reed, Chairman

Jennifer White, Director

July 31st, 2025

Petition Review Summary

Gem Prep: Online (GPO), in operation since 2006, proposes to serve statewide virtual students in grades K-12 using Canvas as a Learning Management System (LMS). GPO requests transfer from the White Pine School District to the Idaho Public Charter School Commission portfolio, seeking alignment with the Commission’s authorizing practices. The school has an existing 12-year charter term and requests a K-12 enrollment cap of 1,000, with a target enrollment of 574 students to allow for flexibility around enrollment. The application articulates the mission of preparing students for college through rigorous academics, data-driven academic instruction and adaptive technology. GPO is currently exceeding all academic and financial measures of the IPCSC framework based on FY24 data and an independent audit.

Summary of Section Ratings

Section 1: Educational Program ↓↓
Meets Standard
Section 3: Board Capacity and Governance Structure ↓↓
Meets Standard
Section 5: School Leadership and Management ↓↓
Meets Standard

Section 2: Financial & Facilities Plan ↓↓
Meets Standard
Section 4: Student Demand & Primary Attendance Area ↓↓
Meets Standard
Section 6: Virtual Schools ↓↓
Meets Standard

Section I: Educational Program:

Standard Rating: Meets Standard

Standard

Idaho Code 33-5205(2)(a)(i) requires applicants to describe, “[t]he educational program, including educational philosophy, student academic proficiency and growth standards, measurement methods, any mission-specific standards that may be unique to the school, and strategies for meeting the needs of specific student populations, including English language learners, at-risk students, and special education or gifted and talented students.”

Overview

GPO is part of a network of eight charter schools operated by Gem Innovation Schools. The educational model is designed to prepare students for college and beyond, beginning with foundational skill development in K-5, and progressing to dual credit opportunities in high school (p. 4). The curriculum is aligned to Idaho Content Standards and includes evidence-based selections such as Amplify, CommonLit, Zearn, and HMH Into AGA (pp. 9–10). GPO provides personalized instruction through adaptive technologies and synchronous teaching, with a clear emphasis on college readiness competencies.

Professional development is continuous, structured around the 'Common Pictures of Excellence (pp. 13–14) framework and data-driven coaching.

Strengths

Guideline I.1. General Standards of Quality & Guideline I.2 Educational Philosophy

GPO presents a strong articulation of the school’s mission and educational philosophy. The program is aligned to the mission of the school.

Guideline I.3. Student Achievement Standards

GPO would currently rate an Exceeds Standard in each metric of the academic framework for the virtual school comparison group based upon FY24 data. The program currently demonstrates high college credit attainment, with 74% of the Class of 2025 is on track to earn an associate’s degree (p. 8).

Concerns**Guideline I.4. Key Educational Design Elements, Curricula, Tools, & Instructional Methods**

While the model supports high achievers, additional detail is needed to demonstrate how asynchronous learners at risk of disengagement will be monitored and supported. The Commission may consider encouraging GPO to develop or describe specific monitoring systems to support students at risk of disengagement, especially those learning asynchronously.

Section II: Financial and Facilities Plan

Standard Rating: Meets Standard

Standard

Idaho Code 33-5205(2)(a)(ii) requires applicants to describe, “[t]he financial and facilities plan with a pre-opening budget, three (3) year operating budget, break-even analysis and cash flow projection, evidence of existing and anticipated funds, and projected facility costs.”

Overview

GPO benefits from shared financial, administrative and business services across the Gem Prep network. The school maintains a healthy reserve, currently equal to approximately 10 months of operating expenses (p. 15). Financial oversight is performed by a qualified board with finance expertise and is supplemented by a trained financial staff. All financial reports, audits, budgets, and disbursements are made publicly under Idaho Code (p. 16). Facilities for staff and required student testing are located across the state and meet ADA and health/safety requirements (p. 17).

Strengths

Guideline II.1. General Standards of Quality

The school would either Meet or Exceed Standard in all financial measures of the IPCSC Performance Framework based upon the audit provided in the application (p. 81).

Concerns

There are no concerns with this section.

Section III: Board Capacity and Governance Structure

Standard Rating: Meets Standard

Standard

Idaho Code 33-5205(2)(a)(iii) requires applicants to describe, “[b]oard capacity and governance structure, including copies of the articles of incorporation and corporate bylaws.”

Overview

The Gem Prep network board governs nine schools, eight of which are in the Idaho Public Charter School Commission portfolio. Board members bring expertise in education, law, real estate, policy, and finance (pp. 18-23). The board conducts regular evaluations, maintains compliance with Idaho Open Meetings Law, and operates with a clearly delineated relationship between governance and school leadership. Board onboarding includes extensive materials and training, including ISBA retreats. Evaluation of the Executive Director is performed annually and guided by the school’s performance dashboard.

Strengths

Guideline III.1. General Standards of Quality

This board’s past performance evidences their ability to successfully guide a network of schools to accomplish a shared mission.

Concerns

There are no concerns with this section.

Governance Capacity Interview Summary IPCSC Policy Section II.D.ii

School: Gem Prep: Online

Interview Date: June 25th, 2025 @ 10:30 am

Present: Barb Femreite, Dennis Turner, Robert Lee

Not Present: Duncan Robb, Mason Harper

IPCSC Staff Present: Jared Dawson, Jen Coffey, Joy Lindner

Application Narrative Standards of Quality: Section III – Board Capacity and Governance Structure

GENERAL QUESTIONS:

Guidance Section 3.C Jared Dawson

- How do you define what makes a successful charter school?

A successful school achieves the stated objectives of the organization and the mission statement; that relationship helps to determine success. Additionally, the quality of the education helps prepare students for higher education.

Guidance Section 2.B Jen Coffey

- How do you see the distinct roles between the board and the charter school's administrator and executive leadership?

The board is the policy maker and oversees the students' achievement, school finances, and works closely with the administration and executive leadership. Administration provides dashboard information for the board.

Guidance Section 4.C Joy Lindner

- How were and will board members be recruited and on boarded?

Potential board members go through a vetting process of interested applicants. They look for specific skills to help stay a well-rounded board. The board has experience with working and co-founding the school, and new members have access to a board manual. Each member serves on a committee based upon their background.

Guidance Section 3.D Jared Dawson

- How will the board track early warning signs (enrollment decline, turnover, governance instability) and proactively notify the authorizer, per statute?

The board utilizes a dashboard to track enrollment, finances, academics, etc. When issues arise they are addressed right away with the CEO and/or CFO, etc.

Guidance Section 3.E Jen Coffey

- What has been or what will be the board's involvement in negotiating contracts, like purchasing the property, curriculum purchase, service providers?

The C-team (management, administration) does the groundwork and preparation for contracts, etc., and the board has the final say. The C-team works out the details and provides documentation to the board, the board has the final say.

Guidance Section 5.C Joy Lindner

- What are some of your biggest lessons learned and changes made since becoming a governing board? What challenges remain to be addressed?

The Gem Prep board is currently well-functioning with various skillsets. Opening and running the first schools presented several challenges; first schools allowed them to prevent other schools from opening the same way. Every year learning and working on items to help GP. IDEA helped to learn a lot of lessons, and brought experiences over, personnel additions also helped to build structure.

Guidance Section 5.A Jared Dawson

- What board training have you sought out as a group? What training would you like to pursue in the future?

The school has a board retreat coming up, which will incorporate some training. In the past year the board has reviewed CEO Jason Bransford's book, expectations, and have learned that every board meeting can be a learning experience.

Guidance Section 2.D Jen Coffey

- How will your board's bylaws and articles of incorporation ensure compliance with Idaho's Open Meetings Law and IPCSC governance structure requirements?

The board follows their bylaws, which mirror Idaho's laws. The board knows open meeting law quite well; they had an ISBA training at a retreat for Open Meeting Law previously.

SCHOOL-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

Guidance Section 1.C Joy Lindner

- What motivated you to seek a transfer from your current authorizer to the IPCSC?

Want to have all of the schools under one umbrella, have everything uniform across the board. Additionally, allows to get ahead of any changes to Idaho law that were proposed last year related to virtual schools and IPCSC.

Guidance Section 3.D Jared Dawson

- What are some of the different challenges with running a virtual school?

One challenge is communication. Not everyone is in one facility, which can complicate things, particularly in the first years of operations. Incorporating online strengths into the other schools to help with blended learning.

Guidance Section 1.C Jen Coffey

- What is the relationship between Gem Prep: Online and other schools in the Gem Prep network of schools?

The Charter Management Organization (CMO) is throughout all of the schools. They have the same philosophy, mission, etc. GPO can help to train brick-and-mortar schools with virtual options, disciplinary to keep those students on track, etc.

Guidance Section 3.E

- Can you explain how the Gem Prep network works? For example, how does the board govern 7-9 schools simultaneously, remain compliant with different funding sources and separation of those funds (e.g., charter schools, online, microschools), plan for future schools, etc.

Funding is kept separate, with each school reporting to the same board. Schools operate individually with the support of the network.

Do you have any questions for us? Are there any questions you have about your petition revision?

No questions.

Section IV: Student Demand and Primary Attendance Area

Standard Rating: Meets Standard

Standard

Idaho Code 33-5205(2)(a)(ii) requires applicants to describe, “[s]tudent demand and primary attendance area, including a description of the population of students the proposed school intends to serve and the target enrollment by grade level.”

Overview

GPO currently serves 313 students (p. 24) statewide and proposes a cap of 1,000 to allow flexibility for grade-level adjustments and enrollment surges (p. 25). “[T]he Board plans to target enrollment at 574 students (approximately 44 students per grade level)” (p. 25).

The school “primarily attracts students from the traditional, private school, and home school settings” (p. 24). Strong academic results and high college credit attainment drive demand. GPO maintains family engagement through parent committees and community partnerships which help with “extracurriculars, fundraising, activities planning, community partnerships, career mentorships, and family nights” (p. 25). “Learning Societies” also provide optional in-person supports in select regions (p. 28).

Strengths

Guideline IV.1. General Standards of Quality

The school has robust dual credit completion and early college success rates. Strong demand is demonstrated by high retention and student outcomes.

Concerns

There are no concerns with this section.

Section V: School Leadership and Management

Standard Rating: Meets Standard

Standard

Idaho Public Charter School Commission Guideline requires applicants to submit information about the school's proposed leadership and management teams. Quality applications describe the structure, desired qualities, intended recruitment process, and the leadership and management plan's connection to the rest of the application.

Overview

GPO has operated since 2006. The school is managed by a seasoned executive team including a CEO, CAO, CFO, and COO (p. 26), each with extensive experience in Idaho charter school leadership. GPO shares and provides services and resources with other Gem Prep schools through the services agreement. This includes high quality special education services, instructional support services, and curriculum and instruction.

Instructional leadership is provided by a principal, with instructional support and staff evaluation as core responsibilities. The team shares services across the Gem Prep network, which enhances efficiency in HR, finance, special education, and curriculum (p. 26). The Board uses performance dashboards monthly to track academic, financial, and operational health.

Strengths

Guideline V.1. General Standards of Quality

The school currently has a strong administration in place with a proven track record of success. A well-integrated network structure provides operational efficiency. The school engages in ongoing monitoring and performance-based evaluations.

Concerns

There are no concerns with this section.

Section VI: Virtual Schools

Standard Rating: Meets Standard

Standard

Idaho Code 33-5205(3) requires applicants to describe:

- “(a) The learning management system by which courses will be delivered;
- (b) The role of the online teacher, including the consistent availability of the teacher to provide guidance around course material, methods of individualized learning in the online course, and the means by which student work will be assessed;
- (c) A plan for the provision of professional development specific to the public virtual school environment;
- (d) The means by which public virtual school students will receive appropriate teacher-to-student interaction, including timely and frequent feedback about student progress;
- (e) The means by which the public virtual school will verify student attendance and award course credit. Attendance at public virtual schools shall focus primarily on coursework and activities that are correlated to the Idaho state thoroughness standards;
- (f) A plan for the provision of technical support relevant to the delivery of online courses;
- (g) The means by which the public virtual school will provide opportunity for student-to-student interaction;
- (h) Any financial agreement that will require an education service provider to assume a virtual school’s financial risk when the virtual school does not have sufficient residual funds to pay the education service provider, to the extent there is such an agreement. Such financial agreement will be favorably considered during the application process. Where this paragraph is applicable, the education service provider shall make its audited financial statements available unless the education service provider already makes such audited financial statements publicly available for compliance with other federal or state laws; and
- (i) A plan for ensuring equal access for all students, including the provision of necessary hardware, software, and internet connectivity required for participation in online coursework, and utilization of remote testing, proctoring, and administration procedures for state-required assessments.”

Overview

GPO meets all statutory requirements for virtual schools under Idaho Code 33-5205(3). The Canvas LMS used to deliver content provides real-time feedback and monitor student progress. GPO uses both synchronous and asynchronous instruction, with

teachers providing personalized support and timely communication (p. 28). Gem Prep Online students are issued a laptop/Chromebook to use while enrolled, and each laptop has filtering systems for safe use (p. 29). “Learning Societies” offer optional in-person structure (p. 28). Internet costs are covered up to a maximum cost limit (p. 29). Attendance is tracked via LMS activity (p. 30), assessments, and live participation. Course credit is based on academic performance and participation.

Strengths

Guideline VI.1. General Standards of Quality

The school currently utilizes an LMS that is common among virtual schools. High attendance and engagement rates (97%).

Guideline VI.4. Technology

Strong support for accessibility, including technology and internet coverage (p. 29).

Concerns

There are no concerns with this section.

IV. CONSIDERATION OF NEW CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION

Elevate Academy Kuna

BASIS

Pursuant to Idaho Code 33-5203 and 33-5205.

BACKGROUND

On August 8, 2025, Elevate Academy Kuna applied for a new charter school. The application is available online with the October 9 Commission Materials at <https://chartercommission.idaho.gov/event/charter-commission-meeting-boise-12/>, “Kuna Charter Application Elevate Academy.”

Elevate Academy Kuna is a proposed CTE-focused charter school intended to serve at-risk students in the Kuna School District in the fall of 2026. The school projects 332 students in grades 6–10 in year one (break-even at 290 students, p. 57), expanding to 488 students in grades 6–12 by year three (p. 41). The school will be governed by Elevate Academy, Inc., which currently oversees five Elevate schools (three authorized by IPCSC).

The application demonstrates alignment with the Elevate network’s mission of combining academic attainment with workforce preparation.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff analysis is available as Attachment IV.B. Pursuant to that analysis, and consistent with Elevate Academy Kuna’s description of its own program, the staff recommends approving a charter for a six-year term under Idaho Code § 33-5205(7)(a).

SPEAKERS

Monica White, Chief Visionary Officer
John Rezendes, Principal
Erik Bullock, Board Chair

COMMISSION ACTION

1. A motion to approve the new charter school application for Elevate Academy Kuna for a [three- or six-year] term effective July 1, 2025.
- OR

2. A motion to approve the new charter school application for Elevate Academy Kuna for a six- or three-year term effective July 1, 2025 with the following conditions: [state conditions and due dates].

OR

3. A motion to deny the new charter school application for Elevate Academy Kuna on the following grounds: [state reasons for denial].

ATTACHMENT IV.A.

The application is available at <https://chartercommission.idaho.gov/event/charter-commission-meeting-boise-12/>, “Kuna Charter Application Elevate Academy.”

ATTACHMENT IV.B.



Application Evaluation Report

Elevate Kuna

September 25, 2025

Idaho Public Charter School Commission

514 W. Jefferson Street, Suite 303

Boise, Idaho 83702

Phone: (208)332-1561

pcsc@osbe.idaho.gov

Alan Reed, Chairman

Rachel Burk, Director

September 25, 2025

Application Review Summary

Elevate Academy Kuna is a proposed CTE-focused charter school intended to serve at-risk students in the Kuna School District in the fall of 2026. The school projects 332 students in grades 6–10 in year one (break-even at 290 students, p. 57), expanding to 488 students in grades 6–12 by year three (p. 41). The school will be governed by Elevate Academy, Inc., which currently oversees five Elevate schools (three authorized by IPCSC).

The application demonstrates alignment with the Elevate network’s mission of combining academic attainment with workforce preparation.

Summary of Section Ratings

Section 1: Educational Program ↓
Approaches Standard
Section 3: Board Capacity and Governance Structure ↓
Meets Standard
Section 5: School Leadership and Management ↓
Meets Standard

Section 2: Financial & Facilities Plan ↓
Meets Standard
Section 4: Student Demand & Primary Attendance Area ↓
Meets Standard
Section 6: Virtual Schools ↓
Not Applicable

Section I: Educational Program

Comments

The application outlines a differentiated CTE model with three student degree pathways (Summit, Peak, Crest), focusing on graduation, workforce readiness, and re-engagement for previously disengaged youth. Summit students focus on achieving graduation within 5 years. Peak students are not on track to graduate in either 5 years or before they turn 21, and focus on workforce readiness and earning one industry certificate. Crest students enter Elevate after several years not attending school, and focus on earning one industry certification, and basic reading and math skills.

Elevate Academy Kuna will operate four instructional days, “with the fifth day designed for students that need to reach their weekly academic goals, receive academic interventions and/or work on interest-based Career Technical projects” (including through small group interventions and locally-sourced special programs, such as driver’s training, swimming lessons, hunter’s safety and more) (p. 16).

The curriculum is structured around integrated CTE pathways where core academic content is taught in applied contexts. Elevate’s proprietary Learning Hook and LiFT learning platform are designed to scaffold learning from surface knowledge to application, while embedding purpose and “why” into every lesson. Literacy, math, and workforce readiness are emphasized as cross-cutting skills.

Elevate Academy Kuna proposes to measure success through a balanced framework including STAR Reading/Math growth, credit attainment, graduation rates, industry certification completion, and measures of student hope and engagement. The application aligns its accountability system with the Idaho Charter School Commission’s performance framework and national alternative accountability measures.

Strengths:

Guideline I.2 - Educational Philosophy

- Articulates a well-developed rationale for focusing on at-risk students, supported by data on graduation disparities in Kuna and West Ada.
- Employs evidence-based frameworks (SOLO taxonomy, Hattie's Visible Learning, Next Step Ready curriculum) to anchor instruction in research.
- The year-round calendar and Friday interventions are responsive to the needs of struggling learners and extend instructional opportunities.

Guideline I.1 General Standards of Quality

- The instructional model is unlike other alternative schools, and provides an opportunity for students in the community that may otherwise be unable to participate in CTE programs.
- Integration of Idaho Content Standards with CTE pathways, workforce readiness standards, and deep learning competencies (communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity).
- Clear curricular framework (SOLO taxonomy and Learning Hook) ensures a progression from knowledge acquisition to application in real-world contexts.
- Early exposure in grades 6–8 through exploratory rotations, culminating in industry-aligned certifications in high school, creates continuity and purpose for students.
- The three-tiered Summit/Peak/Crest program provides flexible options for students with varying credit and engagement levels.

Concerns:

Guideline I.3 Student Academic Achievement Standards B

- Elevate schools in the IPCSC portfolio have struggled to achieve a Meets Standard rating in the academic measures of the IPCSC Performance Framework. Elevate Nampa achieved two Does Not Meet Standard ratings and three "Not Rated" categories in the FY 24 traditional Academic framework (alternative framework ratings were suspended for FY24); Elevate Academy (Caldwell) achieved one Meets Standard rating, two Does Not Meet Standard ratings, and two "Not Rated" categories for FY24; and Elevate North achieved three Does Not Meet Standard rating and two "Not Rated" categories for FY24. The application states that the school will incorporate supplemental STAR assessments (p. 11), and that "Elevate Academy has invested in two network-level instructional coordinators" (p. 12) to assist with meeting Idaho Core Standards.

Guideline I.1 General Standards of Quality

- The application states that the separate programs, particularly Peak and Crest, will be able to "become a 5th or 6th year graduate" (p. 24) according to the alternative school accountability framework. It is unclear how the programs will align with the State of Idaho's specific graduation requirements.

Section II: Financial and Facilities Plan

Comments

The budget framework is detailed across multiple appendices: a financial summary (Appendix A1, p. 52), pre-opening budget (Appendix A2, p. 53), three-year operating budget (Appendix A3, p. 57), and cash flow projections (Appendix A4, p. 60). These projections assume stable enrollment growth to capacity by the 2025–26 school year and anticipate the phased rollout of eight CTE pathways. Revenue assumptions include state educational funding, eventual state and federal CTE allocations, and startup support from grants and industry partners to offset the high cost of technical program equipment. The application states that the school has built relationships with community partners in order to provide practical career and technical services. While the plan demonstrates network experience with multi-campus budgeting, the reliance on external fundraising and donations introduces uncertainty.

The application further outlines financial management practices, including oversight through the Elevate Academy Inc. network, policies for purchasing and payroll, and a commitment to compliance with state requirements (pp. 32–33). However, details regarding internal financial controls, segregation of duties, and independent reserves are limited, raising questions about fiscal safeguards.

In terms of facilities, Elevate Kuna acknowledges the need for specialized spaces that support welding, culinary, manufacturing, and construction programs. Several facility options are under consideration, but no site has been finalized (Appendix A5, p. 61; Appendix F3, p. 89). The school has identified one viable facility option and is attributing the majority of its resources towards acquiring that facility. The plan includes a timeline for acquisition and buildout, supported by Elevate Academy Inc.'s experience in developing similar campuses. Safety, accessibility, and compliance with CTE standards are acknowledged, though specific OSHA and safety protocols are not yet described. This lack of a secured facility remains a significant risk given the complexity of CTE programming.

The application also addresses student access supports. Transportation will be provided within the attendance area, contracted initially with plans to transition to an in-house fleet in later years (p. 31). Food service will be offered from the outset (p. 32). Both commitments are aligned with access priorities for at-risk students, though no vendor contracts or detailed long-term capital plans are in place.

Strengths:

Guideline II.3 Financial Management and Monitoring Plan

- Elevate Academy (Caldwell) employs a business manager with experience managing school finance in traditional public schools and in this specific charter school model in Idaho. Elevate Academy Kuna will contract with Elevate Academy (Caldwell) for these services.
- Elevate Academy Kuna will also purchase management and curriculum design support from Elevate Academy (Caldwell).

Concerns:

- There are no concerns with this section.

Section III: Board Capacity and Governance Structure

Comments

Board directors are experienced with charter school governance and school start up. The board has experience governing three Elevate network schools in the IPCSC portfolio (i.e., Elevate Academy, Elevate Nampa and Elevate North), and two Elevate network schools (i.e., Elevate East and Elevate Twin Falls).

The application also notes that the school will have a local advisory board, which “will act as an incubator for governing board members” (page 40). This should provide experience to potential future board members, and ensure that future board transitions go smoothly.

Strengths:

Guideline III.5 Board Member Recruitment and Training

- The application identifies training opportunities for board directors, including Open Meeting Laws, Ethics and Governance, and Management and Board Roles (page 41).

Guideline III.3 Board Member Qualifications

- The board currently governs five charter schools in the Elevate network.

Concerns:

- There are no concerns with this section.

Founding Charter School Board Governance Capacity Interview Packet

This interview protocol is designed to measure the governance capacity of founding charter school boards. It ensures fairness, consistency, and alignment with Idaho Code Title 33, Chapter 52, while allowing flexibility for diverse and innovative charter models.

Date: 9/22/2025

Name of Charter: Elevate Academy Kuna

Participants in Interview:

- Erik Bullard
- Becky Woodbury
- Gilberto Arias

Interview Questions

Mission & Vision

How did your board develop the school's mission and vision, and how will you ensure they remain central to decision-making? (Reference: §33-5202 Legislative Intent)

Notes: The vision primarily came from Matt Strong and Monica White. There is continuous conversation about mission and vision, and they want it to be strong and purposeful, and is visited all the time. The mission statement is never-ending, and they are continuously improving.

Governance Roles & Legal Compliance

How does your board understand its role in governance versus management? What steps will you take to comply with Idaho nonprofit corporation law, open meeting law, conflicts of interest, and nepotism policies? (Reference: §33-5204)

Notes: The board has worked through the complexity of governance versus management, and are transparent. The CFO advises the board in relation to these issues, and maintaining a viable non-profit. The network has a strong management team in place and stays within the guardrails. The board is briefed on issues occurring in the schools by management, and receive updates from each school.

Board Capacity & Structure

What expertise does your board bring (finance, education, law, community engagement), and how will you fill gaps? How will you ensure transparency and compliance in board operations (e.g., bylaws, reporting requirements)? (Reference: §33-5205(2)(a)(iii))

Notes: The board would like to add a legal perspective to the board. Different areas of workforce development are represented, including manufacturing, community contracts, and it is a bilingual board. The board tries to represent the communities that they serve, and are transparent at the core. The board works well together and takes a solution-based approach. There is a strong alignment to the vision that keeps them focused.

Accountability & Performance

How will your board ensure compliance with the performance certificate, including student proficiency, growth, and stewardship? (Reference: §33-5205B)

Notes: The board discusses issues, have strong reporting back. The board holds people accountable, and have data, reporting, feedback, etc., to base decisions on, and use feedback to create solutions.

Financial Oversight

What financial controls and reporting systems will your board adopt to ensure fiscal soundness and compliance with Idaho financial reporting requirements? (Reference: §33-5207, §33-5210)

Notes: The CFO provides an annual report on finances, and provides expertise on how to pay for buildings, refinancing, etc. The board has in-depth conversations about audits, and pay close attention to data they see on a regular basis. The board reviews expenditures every month.

Risk & Conflict Management

How will your board handle conflicts of interest, contracts with educational service providers, and early warning signs of distress (e.g., enrollment decline, turnover)? (Reference: §33-5206(8), §33-5205B(6)(f))

Notes: The board has a clear understanding to what would need to be done in a situation that presents a conflict of interest, and are prepared to deal with any situations that may occur. The board keeps a live pulse of each school, and are brutally honest and transparent with each other. The board feels they have the right leaders and culture in place.

Innovation & Community Engagement

How will your board balance innovation and flexibility with accountability to students, parents, and taxpayers? How will you engage your primary attendance area community in decision-making? (Reference: §33-5202 Legislative Intent)

Notes: The innovative model is for the taxpayers, workforce and community benefit. The board wants kids to be at the center of their education.

Board Replication Question

Idaho Code §33-5205C allows eligible charter schools to apply for replication if they have successfully completed at least one renewal without condition. Replication requires demonstrating the capacity to manage multiple schools while maintaining high academic and fiscal performance. How would your board ensure that it has the governance structures, oversight systems, and financial controls necessary to successfully operate another school while sustaining performance in the original school(s)?

Notes: The board looks at the success of the schools they already have. Positive impact, community support, have waiting lists for full schools. The demand is there, and graduates are living the vision. The board knows what to expect, and learn as they grow. They have a toolbox of wisdom and experience.

Section IV: Student Demand and Primary Attendance Area

Comments

The school will be located in the Kuna School District, and plans to serve students in Kuna and Meridian. The school has an anticipated year-one enrollment of 332 students in grades 6-10, and a break-even enrollment of 290 students (page 57). By year three the school anticipates enrolling 488 students in grades 6-12 (page 41).

The school district where the proposed school will be located, Kuna school district, currently has one alternative high school, Initial Point High School with an enrollment of 113 students, and one alternative middle school, Synergy Middle School, with an enrollment of 91 students.

Elevate Academy Kuna will be open with breakfast, lunch and bussing available for students five days a week (p. 16).

The proposed school has a marketing and outreach plan in place (page 45) that includes mailers, social media, and the school's website.

Strengths:

Guidelines IV.1 General Standards of Quality

- It appears that the school will provide an option to local families that does not currently exist in the primary attendance area with a CTE program serving at-risk students.

Concerns:

- There are no concerns with this section.

Section V: School Leadership and Management

Comments

Elevate Academy Inc. is the entity comprising the board of directors. Elevate Academy Inc. is legally accountable for Elevate Academy Kuna and other schools in the Elevate Academy Network (e.g., Elevate Academy Caldwell, Elevate Academy Nampa, Elevate Academy North, etc.). The Principal, CFO and COO report to the CEO, Monica White, who reports to Elevate Academy Inc., the governing board.

Strengths:

Guideline I.2 Leadership Team

- The application presents a detail organizational chart and description of the school and network's organizational framework (page 86).

Concerns:

- There are no concerns with this section.

Section VI: Virtual Schools

NOT APPLICABLE

V. CHARTER SCHOOL REPORT

Chief Tahgee Elementary Academy

BACKGROUND

Chief Tahgee Elementary Academy (CTEA) was conditionally renewed in 2022 under a five-year operating contract. At the June 2025 IPCSC meeting, the Commission identified non-compliance with the school's reporting condition, which is copied below. During the June meeting, School Director Jessica Wilson and Principal Cyd Crue presented the school's action plan to address the unmet condition. In response, CTEA was directed to return in October to demonstrate compliance and outline corrective action. Following their presentation, the Commission passed the following motion: "To take no action on the unmet renewal condition at this time and ask Chief Tahgee to report at the October 2025 meeting on compliance with any and all reports."

Condition 1:

CTEA must submit all reports due to the State Department of Education, the State Board of Education, and the Commission by the corresponding deadlines published in Idaho Code, Commission policy, and the State Department of Education's Data Acquisition Calendar. This condition is based on chronically late reporting practices at CTEA, as noted in the operational section of the Commission's Performance Framework across multiple annual performance reports. This condition must be met by June 30th of each year of the renewal term and will be evaluated by Commission staff on June 30th of each year.

SPEAKERS

Rachel Burk, IPCSC Director

Jessica Wilson, CTEA School Director

VI. 2026 COMMISSION MEETING DATES (Action Item)

BACKGROUND

The IPCSC typically holds regular meetings on the second Thursday of every other month.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Proposed meeting dates for 2026 are listed below. The August meeting is scheduled for the *third* Thursday of that month.

February 12, 2026

April 9, 2026

June 11, 2026

August 20, 2026

October 8, 2026

December 10, 2026

SPEAKER

Rachel Burk, IPCSC Director

COMMISSION ACTION

1. Motion to approve the proposed meeting dates for 2026.
OR
2. Motion to approve the following meeting dates for 2026:

VII. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS (Action Item)

BACKGROUND

The IPCSC maintains four standing committees: Finance, Strategic Planning, Application and Policy, and Renewal and Performance.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Proposed Committee Appointments for 2025-2026

Finance Committee:

Chair: Wally Hedrick

Member: Alan Reed

Strategic Planning Committee:

Chair: Sherrilynn Bair

Member: Wanda Quinn

Member: Lisa Paulos

Application and Policy Committee:

Chair: Sherrilynn Bair

Member: Paul Amador

Member: Lisa Paulos

Renewal and Performance Committee:

Chair: Wanda Quinn

Member: Wally Hedrick

Member: Paul Amador

SPEAKERS

Rachel Burk, IPCSC Director

Alan Reed, IPCSC Board Chair

COMMISSION ACTION

1. Motion to approve the recommended committee appointments.
OR
2. Motion to approve the committee appointments as follows:

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment will be limited to three minutes per person. To submit written comment please email to pcsc@osbe.idaho.gov before 5:00 pm MST on Wednesday, October 8, 2025.