The Excel Center
Application

A charter proposal by:
Goodwill LEADS, Inc.

Sponsored by:
Goodwill Industries of Michiana, Inc.

Location for School:

Elkhart, Indiana

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Charter School Proposal

Executive Summary

Goodwill LEADS, Inc. (GLI, doing business as The Excel Center- Northern Indiana), proposes to operate a charter school in Elkhart, Indiana. The school (Excel Center) will adopt the successful Excel Center® model under a license from Goodwill Education Initiatives, Inc (GEI).

Mission and Vision

The mission of GLI is to provide adults the opportunity and support to earn a high school diploma and pursue post-secondary education while developing career paths that offer greater employment and career growth opportunities. Excel Centers "meet students where they are" in their education by providing a flexible structure and supportive relationships to help students manage work, life, and family concerns as they achieve their educational goals.

The vision of GLI is to provide education, support, and career potential for adult high school students. Thousands of individuals drop out of high school each year, crippling their career potential as employers seek workers with higher skills and specialization. As part of a commitment to enhance career potential and access to high-growth jobs for high school dropouts, GLI provides adult high school students in northern Indiana with accelerated learning, opportunities for post-secondary education, and individualized career planning.

Education Need and Target Population

In Elkhart County, 18.2% of the adult population (27,206 individuals) do not have a high school diploma or equivalent.[i] This is also an area of poverty (9.2%)[ii] that suffers from high unemployment with every economic downturn due to heavy reliance on the RV industry. Additionally, 13.5% of the population speaks a language other than English in the home.[iii]

A report by Civic Enterprises (2006) suggests that "circumstances in students' lives and an inadequate response to those circumstances from the schools led to dropping out." As adults, 76% of dropouts would enroll in an adult high school if they could; 47% say that not having a diploma makes it hard to find a good job.

The report goes on to state that the "dropout epidemic in the United States disproportionately affects young people who are low-income, minority, urban, single-parent children attending large, public high schools in the inner city. Dropouts are much more likely than their peers who graduate to be unemployed, living in poverty, receiving public assistance, in prison, on death row, unhealthy, divorced, and ultimately single parents with children who drop out from high school themselves" (Bridgeland, Dilulio & Morison, 2006, pp. iii-2).[iv]

The Elkhart community has a significant need for an Excel Center to increase educational attainment among its residents. A high school diploma has the potential to raise an individual's annual median income $8,008; some post-secondary education can raise it $12,532. The chances for unemployment are cut in half with an Associate Degree, which cannot be achieved without a diploma.[v] A large portion of Elkhart County, over 27,000, do not have a high school diploma or equivalent and are unprepared to participate in the 21st century workforce – one that will require

additional skills beyond high school, whether through an industry certification or post-secondary degree.

According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2013), an additional 10,000 high school graduates in Indiana would increase the gross state product by $100 million dollars, add 800 new jobs, and increase state and local tax revenue by $4.4 million.[ix] Increasing educational attainment among adults in Elkhart has the potential to increase economic growth in areas of the state that need it the most.

Community Engagement

Community interest in The Excel Center has grown through conversations with local leaders as members of the applicant team have shared its success in South Bend, Hammond, and Gary. Due to the growing need for adult high school opportunities in Elkhart County, the Elkhart Community Schools invited the Excel Center to open a campus in the City of Elkhart.

Representatives from the applicant team have met with several organizations in Elkhart County to engage the community and have met with enthusiastic responses regarding the positive potential of The Excel Center to impact their residents. Without exception, representatives of the following organizations expressed support for The Excel Center and have provided opportunities to connect with individuals and organizations of influence in the community.

Elkhart County

- Community Foundation of Elkhart County
- Crossroads United Way
- Elkhart Area Career Center
- Elkhart Education Foundation
- Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce
- Perry Automotive
- Concord Community Schools
- DJ Construction
- Elkhart Community Schools
- Faith Mission
- Hoogenboom-Nofziger Corporation
- WorkOne Northern Indiana

State Representative Dale DeVon has voiced support for The Excel Center during an Indiana legislative session and continues to be a champion for the model. Additionally, services provided by Goodwill Industries of Michiana, Inc. (GIM), parent organization of GLI, in the Elkhart County region, target people with disabilities, ex-offenders, at-risk and out-of-school youth, young mothers, and un-/underemployed individuals. Through these contacts and partnering social service organizations, The Excel Center will provide a unique educational opportunity to a segment of the population with few options to progress toward academic, career, and economic goals without a high school diploma.

Based on these conversations, the school will be designed with community needs in mind. ESL staff will be increased to accommodate the large percentage of native Spanish speakers. Evening classes may need heavier staffing to accommodate those employed by the RV industry.

Education Plan/School Design

GLI will seek to enroll students 18 years and older who have not completed a high school diploma. The Excel Center provides a structured environment that meets the needs of adult students as they work towards a high school diploma. Adult learners often face non-academic

barriers to their educational success, reflecting reasons that students dropped out of school in the first place, such as family or income needs. Effective educational opportunities for adults must provide support and flexibility to promote student achievement, maintain a positive learning environment, and help students overcome various challenges to their continued progress. The flexible structure of The Excel Center allows students to enter at a variety of skill and credit levels and create a realistic path toward educational and career success.

The Excel Center model has three main pillars: a secondary-level academic platform that fits needs of non-traditional students, a career and college readiness focus on viable careers, and a coaching program that works with students to identify barriers and proactively plan ways to remain engaged in their education.

The Excel Center provides an accelerated schedule that allows students to earn course credit at a faster pace than a traditional high school. The Excel Center's instructional program includes team-taught courses, fixed-length teaching, and credit recovery in non-essential courses. Students who demonstrate the necessary skills are encouraged to take college-level coursework, resulting in dual credit and post-secondary credits that encourage continued education.

The Excel Center curriculum is rigorous and aligned with Indiana College & Career Readiness Standards. A Career Transition Counselor works directly with graduating students to identify industries and occupations with above-average growth potential, helping students explore careers and career pathways that offer a livable wage.

Coaching in The Excel Center model is an attempt to address the life barriers and issues that may prevent students from being successful. The Excel Center life coaches are responsible for keeping students engaged and motivated in the school. Coaches work with students to identify potential barriers to students' continued education, whether short-term barriers (such as housing and childcare) or long-term challenges (including student self-efficacy and self-confidence).

The Excel Center operates year-round and, as students graduate or leave the school, spaces are filled by students on the waiting list. As a result, the Excel Center does not operate with discrete grade levels. The Excel Center will maintain a size of 250 students to preserve a small, intimate environment where staff can establish meaningful relationships with students.

The Excel Center® is a nationally proven school model founded by Goodwill Industries of Central and Southern Indiana, based on work by Stephen D. Brookfield, regarding developing critical thinking, and by Dr. Norman H. Cohen and Laurent A. Daloz, regarding mentoring adult learners, as well as recommendations in the 2011 report by Complete College America, *Time is the Enemy*. To date, The Excel Centers have produced more than 6,300 graduates with 81% of graduates receiving industry-recognized credentials in local job sectors with above-average growth potential, and 75% either employed or in college immediately after graduation. GLI, through this charter application and corresponding efforts, intends to build upon the success of The Excel Center to positively impact and improve the academic achievement for adults throughout the state of Indiana.

Vision for Growth.
The vision for growth for The Excel Center of Northern Indiana is to continue to grow

enrollment at all four schools to capacity enrollment. In 2023, with 8 years' experience administrating Excel Centers, GLI will determine whether there are additional communities in northern Indiana that would benefit from the Excel Center model to increase educational attainment of local adult residents. As opportunities may arise in unusual places (such as satellite blended learning sites) over the next three years, the leadership team will evaluate the costs and benefits of expanding The Excel Center model.

Network Governance and Leadership.
The Excel Center Northern Indiana is overseen by Cynthia Cavanaugh. The GLI Board of Directors consists of 13 individuals representing various business and nonprofit sectors, each with leadership experience and a concern for education and community improvement, as well as GIM's CEO, Debie Coble. Every effort will be made to maintain a diverse board membership representing the communities where The Excel Centers are located, yet based out of GLI headquarters' city, South Bend. This structure will provide stable, effective governance and leadership over the long term.

Section I: Evidence of Capacity

School Governance

1) Key Members of the Applicant Group for Goodwill LEADS, Inc. (GLI):

Debie Coble- President/ CEO of Goodwill Industries of Michiana, Inc. (GIM); Ex-officio Board Member of GLI
Cynthia Cavanaugh – Vice President of the Excel Centers
Mike Gallo – Lead Teacher at Excel Center – South Bend; prospective School Director for Excel Center- Elkhart
Justin Zobrosky- School Director of Excel Center- South Bend
Rose Loraff – Director of Kids Excel
Karman Eash- Chief Financial Officer of GIM
Ben Szumial- Accountant for GIM, serving solely GLI
Rolla Baumgartner- Chair of GLI Board
Mary Pat Latowski- Vice Chair of GLI Board
Sara Brodzinski- Chief Human Resources Officer of GIM
Guy Fisher- Vice President of Community Engagement at GIM

2) Qualifications for and experience with establishing a high-quality charter public school in Indiana and assuming stewardship of public funds:

Debie Coble is the CEO of Goodwill Industries, Michiana. In her role, Coble oversees a $40 million organization with a payroll of over 1000 individuals and is responsible for bringing not only The Excel Center, but several other programs into Goodwill that assist individuals in reaching their vocational potencial. Coble has her master's degree in Public Community Services Management and initiated the original charter application for Excel Center- South Bend in 2014. She is an ex-officio member of the GLI Board and has experience in finances, performance management, communityengagement, facilities management, and legal compliance.

Cynthia Cavanaugh has been the administrator for the Excel Centers- Northern Indiana since May of 2018 and was School Director at the Excel Center-Hammond for one year. She was involved in the planning and implementation of GLI's Hammond and Gary Excel Centers, including facility and school design, and hiring and training of staff. She oversees instruction, spending, and school performance for all three centers. She has 14 years of experience in secondary education, including school leadership, administration, governance, curriculum, instruction, assessment, human resources, performance management, community engagement, and legal compliance.

Mike Gallo has bachelor's degrees in communications and secondary social studies education., and a master's degree in the art of teaching. 18 years' experience in middle-school, secondary, and higher education. He has taught English, social studies and personal finance. As the Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment at a K-8 Charter School, he mentored teachers, evaluated curriculum and teacher performance, and coordinated standardized testing. With five years at the Excel Center- South Bend, he is currently the Lead Teacher and Corporation Test Coordinator, he has used data to track progress and focus on instructional goals. He has also been

key in developing policies to improve student behaviors and success. He has experience in school leadership and administration, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and performance management.

Justin Zobrosky has 8 years' experience as a certified social studies teacher and contributed to the Indiana Department of Education standards review in 2013. Justin was instrumental in raising academic standards at Xavier School of Excellence and was selected as a semifinalist for Indiana teacher of the year. As the first Lead Teacher at Excel Center South Bend, and current Director, he has been instrumental in the planning and implementation of GLI's first school, including selection of curriculum, formation of policies, school leadership, administration, and student engagement.

Rose Loraff has a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a master's in early childhood education. Her nearly 20 years' experience in early childhood education includes a Head Start teacher and community outreach specialist in Indiana and Michigan. As the Early Childhood Services Director for three Excel Schools for the past 5 years, she has upgraded the drop-in childcare concept to a High Scope-level preschool. She is a certified High Scope teacher and trainer and is working toward full certification for all Excel locations. She has experience with curriculum, instruction and assessment, performance management, and parent and community engagement.

Karman Eash has a bachelor's degree in accounting and is a CPA. She has experience as a controller for an institute of higher education and has been on a local school board for 6 years. She has over 20 years' experience, including CFO and CCO for a $750 million investment advisory firm, controller for international and national manufacturing firms, and serving as CFO of GIM for nearly a year. She has experience in finances, business, performance management, facilities management, and legal compliance. Each currently serves as President of her local school board.

Ben Szumial has his MBA and is a certified internal auditor. He has experience in finance, auditing, and previously worked in University of Notre Dame's Office of Research, providing grant management, and ensuring fiscal compliance for award recipients. He has been responsible for all accounting functions for the Excel Centers from planning and implementation and will continue to provide fiscal management for new Centers. He has experience in finance, business, and legal compliance.

Rolla Baumgartner earned his doctorate in education and retired as Dean of Davenport University. He has experience in school administration, curriculum, instruction, performance management, community engagement, and legal compliance. He has been a teacher, principal, superintendent, and curriculum coordinator in public and private schools, from elementary through post-secondary. He served as Chair for the GLI Board during planning and implementation and the first year of operation for Excel Centers in South Bend, Hammond, and Gary.

Mary Pat Latowski has an associate of arts degree and paralegal certification. She has 20 years' experience as a financial advisor and compliance work director, managing portfolios for high-net-worth clients. She has also managed trusts, estates, and foundations. She has served on the

Board of Goodwill LEADS for five years, currently as Vice Chairperson. She has experience in finance, business, and legal compliance.

Dana Trowbridge serves as Goodwill LEADS treasurer. Having worked in banking and financial services for over 38 years, Trowbridge is the Senior Vice President of First State Bank of Middlebury and serves as a Business Banking Relationship Manager in the Northern Indiana and lower Southwest Michigan markets. His educational background includes a B.S. in Finance and a B.S. in Management/Administration from Indiana University.

Sara Brodzinski has a bachelor's degree in Business with a concentration in Human Resources and is a SHRM Senior Certified Professional. She has over 25 years' experience in human resources, including one year with Goodwill. She has developed a human resource strategy to include succession planning, talent and performance management, training, and development, and compliance. She has experience in finances, business, human resources, performance management, and legal compliance.

Guy Fisher has a master's degree in Administration and has experience in finance, performance management, parent and community engagement, and school administration in fund development and financial aid. Prior to his current role as Vice President of Mission Advancement for the past 6 years, he served as Director of Financial Aid for Bethel College for more than 25 years.

3) See **Attachment 1** for full résumés (including contact information) for each member of the applicant group including all current and proposed governing board members, key staff members, and consultants involved in the application or the development, governance, and operation of the Excel Center- Elkhart.

4) The Excel Center- Elkhart will not have an independent governing board, but will be governed by an existing, single network-level board based out of South Bend. The current GLI Board consists of thirteen individuals representing financial, educational, nonprofit, legal, faith- based, community, and healthcare organizations. To ensure there will be active and effective oversight of this new school, GLI will include members of each of the community where Excel Centers are located as Board members. Accommodations, such as rotating meeting sites and teleconferencing, will be made to serve a diverse geographic population.

With these measures in place, there will be active and effective oversight of the new and established Excel Centers in GLI's portfolio. See **Attachment 2** for completed and signed Board Member Information Forms for each current governing board member.

5) No formal advisory bodies or councils will be formed, although community or student councils may be formed if there is sufficient interest. The roles and duties of these informal groups, as well as their relationship to the Board of Directors will vary based on their reasons for convening. Although the Board assumes sole governing authority over each Center in the Northern Indiana network, it will engage members of each of the communities where Centers are located, including students, to inform school direction and policies.

6) Mike Gallo, the Lead Teacher at Excel Center South Bend for 4 years, has been identified as a

potential candidate to lead the school in achieving its mission. Mike Gallo has served in charter schools for more than 8 years. Before leaving in 2013, Mike was the Team Leader in charge of testing, curriculum, and instruction at Xavier School of Excellence in South Bend, a former K-8 public charter school. At Xavier, Mike led a team of teachers and aides in serving some of South Bend's most disadvantaged families.

Since 2015, Mike has served as Lead Teacher, giving him vast experience in school leadership while staying connected to the classroom. Mike has contributed to much of Excel – South Bend's success, ensuring instruction is relevant and rigorous enough to prepare adult students beyond high school. He has received training in Mental Health Awareness, Restorative Justice, and Implicit Bias, which have prepared him to serve the best interest of all students, especially those with the most need. Mike displays relentless commitment to service, which is evident through his willingness to meet students where they are, both literally and figuratively. He has proven this by visiting students at home, attending community events, and redesigning his instructional approach depending on student need.

All school leadership positions will be in the employ of GLI and selected by the Vice President of the Excel Centers with oversight by the Board. School Directors make staff hiring decisions with oversight from the VP, ensuring that instructors and school curriculum are applied according to the principles of The Excel Center model and that school is meeting desired educational and student outcomes.

Essential functions of Excel Center School Directors include supervision and management of faculty and staff, creating and maintaining a safe and secure educational environment for up to 350 students, and managing the fiscal activities of the school. Directors report to the VP and will be required to hold a bachelor's degree in a relevant field, although a master's degree is preferred. Other Director qualifications include:

- Indiana Secondary Administrator's License (preferred but not required)
- 5+ years in a school-related leadership role
- Prior experience managing groups of professionals
- Effective presentation and communication skills
- Solid planning and organizational skills

7) Cynthia Cavanaugh, the VP of the Excel Centers, will lead development of the new schools between the time of authorization and opening. Upon charter approval, Excel Center- South Bend Lead Teacher will be transitioned to the Excel Center- Elkhart School Director. Cavanaugh will serve as administrator over all four schools and any future schools added to the network.

8) Cynthia Cavanaugh has been the administrator for the Excel Centers- Northern Indiana since May of 2018 and was School Director at the Excel Center-Hammond for one year. She was involved in the planning and implementation of GLI's Hammond and Gary Excel Centers, including facility and school design, and hiring and training of staff. She oversees instruction, spending, and school performance for all three centers. She has 14 years of experience in secondary education. Her responsibilities will be to train Directors and ensure compliance with all State, ICSB, and Excel Center policies, procedures, and guidelines.

Education Service Provider

1) The GLI Board does not intend to contract with an ESP for school management services. Curriculum design and professional development is based on the tenets of The Excel Center Network and customized by administration teachers based on local school, teacher, and student needs. Student assessment and data management is coordinated internally. Goodwill Industries of Michiana (GIM) has high-level oversight of financial, operational, and facilities management, but decisions are made at the GLI board and administration level. GLI has a dedicated financial manager to track expenses, revenue, and budgets for all schools. Human resource management isprovided in-kind by GIM. Goodwill LEADS has successfully carried out these services independently with high school performance marks (A's and B's) for the past 2 years.

2) The GLI Board does intend to contract with an ESP for school management services. **Attachment 3** is not applicable.

3) See **Attachment 4**, Governance and Operational Structure, which defines board, network, and school-level decision making as it relates to key functions, indicating where primary authority for each function resides.

Network Vision, Growth Plan and Capacity

The applicant group is not seeking additional multiple charters from ICSB. **Attachment 5** is not applicable.

Section II: School Design

Innovation

The Excel Center model is innovative by providing adult students with the supports and flexibility needed overcome the various challenges to their continued education. It is a unique model in its hands-on approach that acknowledges the needs of the whole student through wrap-around supports.

School design. Excel Centers are designed for the committed, adult student and are structured to meet adult needs such as transportation assistance, flexible schedules, and free childcare. Students enroll in one coherent program during iExcel (student orientation) and receive substantial help from life coaches, teachers, and other staff to understand their path to earn a high school diploma and post-secondary credentials.

Students build relationships with other students and teachers in a small school environment. In addition, life coaches work to ensure that students remain engaged in the school's academic program and feel like they belong in the school's culture. Coaches will work with students to identify and mitigate potential barriers to students' continued education and encourage them to continue when the work becomes difficult.

Kids Excel gives students the ability to focus on their classes while their children are cared for in a safe environment nearby. This service is offered free of charge and gives children opportunities to learn and develop skills while their parents are attending classes.

Curriculum. The Excel Center curriculum is designed to meet students where they are. Transcripts indicate prior credit attainment; assessments indicate level of mastery. Both are considered when creating an education plan for the student that will allow them to earn a high school diploma and prepare for post-secondary opportunities.

For example, English 1 and 2/ Math A and B, allow students to earn elective credit, helping students connect their remedial work to the goal of earning credits towards their high school diploma. Other classes are co-curricular, allowing students to earn a Language Arts and Social Studies credit in one class, for example, by incorporating writing standards into a history class. Additionally, students can earn dual high school and post-secondary credits by taking college-level coursework through Ivy Tech Community College (ITCC).

Instructional Strategies. Instructional strategies are limited only by the imagination of the teacher and are customized for the students in each class. They are continuously evaluated and updated for effectiveness.

The Excel Center purposefully introduces students to high growth, high demand fields where the prospects of career development and stable employment are significant. To prepare students for self-sufficiency, they are expected to earn at least one credential beyond their diploma, which is increasingly essential in the modern job market.

Uses of technology. Students have access to computers and internet to complete assignments,

perform research, and access email. These include mobile classroom laptops that are used during class time as needed, and a 30-station computer lab open 48 hours a week. Students often communicate with staff and other students through email and texting and can submit assignments and access grades online. Software programs allow for a combination of remedial skills building and high school credit attainment (as a supplement to face-to-face classes), as well as standardized testing.

As a nationally proven school model, Excel Centers provide a platform to share evidence-based learning and best practices from school to school. With 30 current Excel Centers in five states and Washington DC, knowledge sharing has the potential for further replication of this model through livestream classes and other blended learning possibilities.

Approaches to time. The Excel Center is listed on the ICSB website as an example of a school model taking innovative approaches to time. Classes operate for at least 90 minutes each day, with 6 class periods each day, Monday through Thursday, 9am to 8pm. Evening classes are based upon need and student demand. Fridays are available to access school resources and receive tutoring or complete makeup work. Students can select whattime of day to attend class, schedules are fixed for each 8-week term, and students can enroll at the start of any of the 5 terms during the school year, unless there is a waiting list. Unlike a traditional high school, this provides opportunities to earn credits at an accelerated rate, or at whatever pace fits the student's circumstances.

1) The traditional model for adult high school completion is to take a High School Equivalency test (formerly GED, now TASC in Indiana). According to the National Educational Longitudinal Survey (2008), high school dropouts are persistent in trying to further their education,[vi] yet face limited options to achieve their goals. Studies have challenged the long-term benefits of earning an HSE over a high school diploma, the latter of which leads to higher wages, higher college completion rates, and higher acceptance into the military. Researchers maintain that the process of completing school (rather than a test) demonstrates persistence, motivation, and reliability to employers.[vii] The HSE may not be the best avenue for all adults seeking to complete their high school education.

2) The curricular foundation of The Excel Center is based upon significant evidence that its model meets the educational needs of adults.[viii] Research by The Gates Foundation (2006) indicates that life factors are at least equal to academic factors as related to dropout rates/ reasons. 35% of those surveyed dropped out because they were failing school; 32% had to get a job; 26% had become a parent; 22% had to help their family.[ix] These challenges also affect the structure of how students continue their education.

Complete College America's report, *Time is the Enemy* (2011), highlights how the pace of traditional college programs is a detriment to adults' lasting success. The following recommendations by the report have been incorporated into the design of The Excel Center to accommodate students who are balancing commute times, family obligations, work, and school:

- Use block schedules with fixed and predictable classroom meeting times.
- Allow students to proceed at a faster pace, with shorter academic terms, less time off between terms, and year-round scheduling.
- Simplify the registration process.

- Form peer support and learning networks.
- Embed remediation into the regular educational design, so that students do not waste time before they start earning credits.[x]

3) It is anticipated that ICSB will hold the new Excel Centers and GLI to the same accountability standards to which it holds all ICSB-authorized adult high schools through alternative accountability metrics, as it has for the existing Excel Centers which have been authorized by ICSB over the past decade.

Curriculum and Instructional Design

1) On the following page, please note the graphic that illustrates the framework for the proposed instructional design that reflects the needs of adult high school students and will ensure all students meet Indiana Academic Standards. The Excel Center model was designed with 3 R's as foundational to its strategy: Relationships, Relevance, and Rigor.

Relationships. Adult learners benefit from strong relationships with peers and staff; these relationships provide consistent support for student education, strengthen motivation to achieve goals, and build resiliency to overcome obstacles that might impede progress.

Relevance. Students who have dropped out require flexibility in their educational programs; students will enroll at various skill levels and will balance their educations with many life obstacles, including work and family obligations. Instruction is designed to be relevant to students' experiences, current circumstances, and life goals.

Rigor. The primary focus is to develop each student's ability to be successful in post-secondary environments and to develop skills required in the modern workforce. Curriculum exceeds the Indiana College and Career Ready Academic Standards (ICCRAS) adopted by the Indiana State Board of Education (ISBOE).

a) The basic learning environment is largely classroom-based, although online classes are utilized for credit recovery and some electives. The school is designed to benefit adult learners within a mature environment of open discussion, self-directed learning, and personal accountability.

Students participate in fixed-time classes where they cover key academic subjects in language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. Reading, math, and skills labs are available for those who need remediation. Courses often integrate material from multiple disciplines, allowing students to demonstrate learning standards in an integrated, accelerated format.

b) Classes will include between 10 and 15 students in each course, allowing for small teacher to student ratios and increased individual attention. Class structure will depend on the course content, enrolled student, and the instructor, but will encourage open discussion and peer learning.

c) The Excel Center's education plan has three main pillars: (1) an academic philosophy that meets the goals and needs of adult students, (2) a concentrated focus on Career and College

The Excel Center Model

Key Pillars:

Secondary-Level Education

- Accelerated pace of learning and credit attainment
- Instruction by both licensed instructors and tutoring by unlicensed resource staff
- Classroom instruction paired with online credit recovery
- Resource Area provides intensive support to students in need of additional assistance
- Credits can be earned for valid and relevant work experience
- Student testing used to measure progress

Postsecondary Education and Career Pathways

- Strong relationship with local community college provider
- *Test-approved* students able to enroll while still taking high school classes
- Dual credit course offerings available for students
- Students can work towards certificates and associate degrees
- Extensive preparation & follow along for students in college
- Partnering with industries to present career options

Coaching

- Goal to promote continued retention of students by addressing life barriers
- Students placed into cohorts and meet one-on-one with a coach
- Coaching addresses life skills, locating community resources, and creating future plans
- Proactive barrier removal for critical life/ work issues
- Effective selection of coaches as a key barometer of success

Structures and practices for student success

- Flexible scheduling available to meet needs of working and busy adults
- Available transportation and easy access for non-driving students
- Childcare provided for students with children
- Facility has sufficient space for a resource area, classrooms, cohort, and one-on-one meeting spaces
- Mature learning environment: Student population is a mix of younger and older students

Readiness, and (3) a coaching platform designed to address barriers that may impede a student's continued educational success. This plan is incorporated into the curriculum. Please see the graphic on the previous page.

d) Academic instruction for students who have dropped out requires flexibility in the design of the educational program. Students will enroll in The Excel Center at various skill levels, have different numbers of credits to achieve, and many will balance work and family obligations. Therefore, The Excel Centers use a "one student at a time" method where each student establishes his or her educational goals and moves at his or her own pace to achieve learning goals. Every student will have a unique educational plan, crafted to fit his or her specific needs.

The Excel Center curriculum covers key academic subjects to prepare students for post-secondary education through opportunities relevant to their educational and career goals. Students will cover the basic requirements to receive a high school diploma and enroll in some form of post-secondary education, whether a certificate or credential program or a track moving towards an associate degree. In addition, students who have demonstrated high skill levels (as shown on by high scores on the Knowledge Assessment) are eligible to enroll in dual credit courses, thereby beginning their post-secondary education while still in high school.

d) Technology features prominently in the design and delivery of academic content. Coursework is presented in multimedia formats, reaching different learning styles and personalities. In addition, students can participate in computer-based instruction for online credit recovery, diagnostic assessment, and for tutoring-based work. Students are also able to upload assignments and check grades online, as well as communicate with teachers and coaches on a regular basis.

e) Hiring a high quality, highly effective school staff is critical to the success of any new school. To ensure access to the most qualified individuals, Excel Centers will do the following:

- Recruit from current Excel Center networks
- Leverage the talent and expertise of GIM's Human Resources department
- Focus on increased awareness of Excel Centers within the Elkhart and surrounding communities
- Customize staff recruitment efforts to focus on the unique aspects of The Excel Center, including the adult population, motivated students, creative instruction, and an extended school schedule and calendar
- Continue to develop partnerships with organizations that assist with teacher placement and source staffing candidates via networking, website job postings and event participation
- Offer salaries and benefits competitive with other local schools
- Provide adequate professional development prior to school openings, including learning from current Excel leaders and staff members

f) The evidence for The Excel Center method of adult instruction is based on Stephen Brookfield's work in Critical Teaching, which "begins with developing students' powers of critical thinking so that they can critique the interlocking systems of oppression embedded in contemporary society" (2005, p. 353).[xi] Students who have spent their adult lives trying to get

ahead without a high school diploma need to learn how to think to be successful. Therefore, open discussion, student-to-student interaction, and personal accountability is encouraged.

2) Instructional strategies that the school will implement to support the education plan are well-suited for adult high school students. The academic environment and culture of the school are driven by student motivation to increase educational attainment and create better opportunities to enter living wage careers. The Excel Center's individualized and self-directed approach will require highly motivated students who can develop the initiative to use the school's various resources and instructional methods in the way that best fits their unique needs. Teachers and coaches will monitor and meet with students regularly to provide encouragement and keep students' motivation at high levels.

Since Excel Centers meet students where they are, instructional strategies will differ from person to person and classroom to classroom, to meet the needs of all students. For example, students who enroll in The Excel Center with partial credits may complete certain courses via the standards-based online learning program, Plato Courseware, with a teacher facilitator. Students whose placement exams indicate a reading, writing, or mathematics competency level that is lower than a 9th grade equivalent are placed into remediation courses for high school credit, allowing them to access grade level content by building key skills. On the other hand, students whose placement tests indicate high aptitude may be placed in advanced math or literature classes. Special education, English Language Learners, and those in need of tutoring receive additional assistance on a weekly basis.

Classes meet in extended blocks and in face-to-face settings, with small class sizes, permitting teachers to establish relationships of trust and respect with students. Courses are often team-taught among several instructors, blending coursework across multiple domains to increase the relevance of education and to encourage students to think critically about interdisciplinary ties in the curriculum. Open discussion is encouraged to foster deeper understanding, link knowledge to former experiences, and develop creative thinking.

Life coaches encourage a student community which inspires peer support. Life coaches also provide encouragement, individual attention, and assistance in meeting life challenges to maintain student engagement. The 8-week schedules accelerate the pace in which a student can attain course credit, making progress toward a high school diploma more tangible. Students have the freedom to choose morning, afternoon, evening, and online classes to fit their work and family schedules.

3) The only key educational features that may differ in the new Centers are based on high growth careers that are unique to each community. Every site of The Excel Center explores what potential careers exist in their local community and includes a focus on those industries that will benefit local jobseekers. In Elkhart, the focus will be on Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare, and Hospitality careers. As a component of its Advance Manufacturing focus, The Excel Centers have established working relationships with Conexus Indiana, an initiative to capitalize on emerging opportunities in advanced manufacturing and logistics, aligning resources and expertise to make Indiana a leader in these growing industries.

The Excel Center's curriculum has two overall goals: 1) teach the necessary content to graduate

with a high school diploma and 2) develop proficiency in the skills - both technical and 21st-century - required to be successful in modern careers. The Excel Center's curriculum provides an individualized road map to student success and serves as a customizable guide that assists in planning each student's instructional program, allowing for the best possible education and career outcomes. The objective of the curriculum is to ensure that specific skills are taught and mastered in a timely manner and in ways consistent with Indiana Standards. The school blends coursework in engaging and interesting ways that also allow students to learn what they need and progress through proficiency of subjects rather than discrete grade levels.

4) Please see **Attachment 6** for a high school-level core curriculum scope and sequence by subject, that demonstrates clear alignment with Indiana's Academic Standards.

5) The majority of The Excel Center's course offerings will be taught via direct instruction. Technology will be used for online credit recovery, diagnostic assessment, and for tutoring-based work. The Excel Center does not meet the definition of a virtual charter school.

Pupil Performance Standards

1) The Excel Center's academic content is aligned with Indiana College and Career Readiness Standards and uses these standards throughout its coursework and lesson plans. All standards were deconstructed and opportunities for integrating courses were utilized to make the content explicit and meaningful. See **Attachment 7** for The Excel Center's Academic and Exit Standards.

2) Due to the nature of students entering the school at a variety of different skills levels and course needs (pursuant to their transcript), and those skill levels not necessarily matching credits previously earned, The Excel Center does not operate using distinct grade levels. Instead, students progress through the curriculum at an accelerated pace, ensuring they build the requisite skills to enter the next course in Excel Center course progression, and completing all credit and graduation requirements prior to graduation.

Although it can be useful in conventional academic situations with traditional student populations, a grade level categorization would have little benefit to a typical adult student. For example, the "freshman" label on an adult learner might create the mistaken belief that it will take several years to complete the work in The Excel Center, even though the student's self-directed pace may mean that he or she could complete requirements before that time. Instead of discrete grade levels, students will only be measured on the number of credits they need to graduate from the school.

Students routinely meet with their individual life coaches to assess where they are academically and where they need to be to meet all their academic and career goals as well as where they need to be to graduate. Graduation criteria are also listed in the student handbook.

High School Graduation Requirements

1) To graduate, a student at The Excel Center must fulfill the graduation requirements for the State of Indiana as established by the Department of Education. Students will work towards a

Core 40 diploma, earning credits with the following requirements:

- English / Language Arts: 8 Credits
- Mathematics: 6 Credits
- Science: 6 Credits
- Social Studies: 6 Credits
- Directed Elective: 5 Credits
- Physical Education: 2 Credits
- Health and Wellness: 1 Credit
- General Electives: 6 Credits

Students will earn credit hours by successfully demonstrating mastery over the standards established in each course. Teachers assess mastery by monitoring student work and evaluating their growth. By integrating coursework across domains, scheduled classes may allow students to earn multiple credits through the work of one class. Each class is mapped to indicate which credits apply toward a Core 40 diploma. Students earn credit by demonstrating satisfactory completion of a course and earn a passing grade higher than a D in that course.

Student transcripts from other schools will also be reviewed to determine if any coursework completed prior to enrolling at The Excel Center may also apply to the Core 40 diploma requirements. In addition, students who can demonstrate proficiency through standardized testing can also earn credits for courses in which they have already demonstrated knowledge. Students may also earn credit by enrolling in dual-credit programs at a local community college. In these instances, these credits are listed as transfer credits and not as credits explicitly granted by The Excel Center. Some courses that are required for the Core 40 will be available for students to take via online credit recovery courses.

Student grade-point averages (GPA) are calculated based upon the grades that students earn in each course, using a traditional scale and averaged upon the points earned for each credit. In courses that are awarded multiple credits, the student's letter grade applies the same point for each of those credits earned. For blended courses, a student earns a GPA based upon their performance for that domain within the course and earns credit for that portion of the classroom setting.

Student transcripts include the school's contact information, the student's contact information, and demographics. In addition, the transcript details the time (in terms) during which the student was enrolled at the school, and his or her record of courses taken, and credits earned. Each course includes the grade earned and grade-point equivalent for that class. Transcripts also include the student's performance on standardized testing, including GQE (for older students) and state assessments.

The Excel Center offers elective courses that meet the educational needs of students. Most of these electives prepare the student to explore the viability of a career in an industry of a given program. Electives (and potential certifications) that may be offered based on demand include:

- Career Planning and Success Skills
- Film Literature
- Speech
- Current Problems, Issues, and Events
- Health Education (CNA)
- Welding Technology (AWS)

2) Even though it is not an Indiana graduation requirement, an Excel Center graduation requirement includes at least one career pathway or dual credit course. This requirement encourages the pursuit of a post-secondary education for greater career opportunities. These are offered in cooperation with Ivy Tech Community College.

Students work towards a Core 40 diploma. They earn credits and meet all the requirements to earn that diploma. In some cases, students are better suited to seek a General Education diploma due to their unique situation, such as special education status. These students are encouraged to earn work-related certification while a student at the Center, to improve lifelong employability.

Maintaining the Indiana Core 40 standard allows Excel Center students to receive the same accreditation as a traditional high school student. This credential allows them to apply to college, post-secondary programs, military, and employment opportunities, demonstrating they had the persistence and motivation to complete their diploma.

The additional Excel Center graduation requirement of post-secondary coursework not only gives students a taste of college and their ability to complete college-level work, but often provides a transferable credential in a high-demand career field, increasing employment opportunities. Through dual credit classes, students can begin their post-secondary career with earned credits toward their degree.

3) The Excel Center model provides several supports for students at-risk of dropping out or not meeting graduation requirements, since it is designed to meet the needs of students who have already dropped out of a high school. The curricular focus is around accelerating the pace at which a student can earn a high school diploma, gaining exposure to new careers (and post-secondary education required to enter those careers), and becoming reengaged in the educational system. Students who continue to make consistent academic progress – no matter the pace – will be encouraged to continue working towards their high school diploma.

Additionally, the use of life coaches in The Excel Center model is an attempt to address the life barriers and issues that prevent students from being successful. The Excel Center life coaches are responsible for keeping students engaged and motivated in the school. The relationship that coaches create with each student is a critical factor in student success, as that relationship will provide security, confidence, and encouragement for students to continue when the work becomes difficult and life barriers become difficult to manage. Coaches will work with students to identify potential barriers to students' continued education and develop action plans to balance family, work, and school responsibilities.

School Calendar and Schedule

The Excel Center calendar operates year-round with minimal breaks. The proposed 2021-2022 academic calendar for Excel Center- Elkhart as well as the proposed weekly schedule of classes is included as **Attachment 8**.

Academic and Non-Academic Programs. Since the primary goals of adult students are increased educational attainment and career opportunities, programs are largely academic, without the distractions of athletic teams or music groups. Course offerings are developed upon review of the courses needed by the students enrolled at the school. The Excel Center is designed to be adaptable to student needs and the course schedule and offerings are often changed each term to meet student needs. Furthermore, this means that the course schedule and specific courses offered each term vary from one Center to another. A variety of activities will take place in the facility throughout each school day, including classes, one-on-one tutoring, self-directed study, and coaching activities.

Interactions with life coaches may or may not be focused on academic activities, but more often provide support in balancing school and outside activities. Additionally, any extra-curricular activities are student-led, such as the student council at Excel Center- South Bend, which organizes spirit days and began fundraising for an outdoor study area.

Instructional Days. During full years of operation, Excel Centers will operate with 170 days of accelerated, scheduled instruction and an additional 38 days of instruction available to students, as needed, on Fridays, functioning year-round. A typical school week includes four days of fixed-time classroom instruction (Monday through Thursday) and one day of self-directed student learning (Friday). Fridays are available for teachers and staff to prepare for classes, hold case conferences, staff meetings, and one-on-one tutoring sessions and meetings with students.

The school calendar is designed to reinforce educational success by accelerating the pace at which students can earn credits. The school's class schedule operates on 8-week terms. This structure gives students the ability to earn credits at a faster pace than in a traditional 15-week semester. After an 8-week cycle is completed, students are then assigned into a new schedule with new coursework.

Instructional Hours. Classes consist of extended teaching times of 90 minutes each, with some courses merging periods together for 3-hour blocks. Classes are scheduled from 9:00am until 8:00pm, Monday through Thursday. Not all students will be enrolled in classes for all 6 periods each day, but will attend classes when their schedules allow, fitting coursework in together with work or family responsibilities. Each day of fixed-time instruction provides up to 9 hours of instructional time available for students. Each week includes up to 36 hours of fixed-length instruction.

Center staff will adjust classroom schedules to meet the students' credit needs and their ability to attend classes for each term. On Fridays, students can continue their online credit recovery courses, take diagnostic or formative examinations, work with a tutor or meet with their instructors in one-on-one meetings.

Because of the variability of student schedules within the 8-week terms, a student may not take time in all four subjects during a given school day. As a result of flexible scheduling to meet student body credit needs, some courses (including basic skills instruction) will be offered every term, while others (higher-level math and English courses) offered less frequently but at least

every other term. For a student enrolled in any one of these classes, however, he or she would have minimum instructional times for the following subjects (chart below).

Language Arts: 1 ½ hours (90 minutes)
Mathematics: 3 hours (180 minutes)
Science: 3 hours (180 minutes)
Social Studies: 1 ½ hours (90 minutes)

School Culture

1) The Excel Center culture is based on values included in their 3 R's: Relevance, Rigor, and Relationships.

Relevance. Students who enroll in The Excel Center after previously dropping out of school have demonstrated a clear motivation to continue their education, having recognized the challenges of life without a high school diploma. In recognition of the maturity and motivation of Excel Center students, the school's format reflects a school culture that benefits adult learners, including open discussion, self-directed learning, and personal accountability.

The environment within Excel Centers are designed to meet adults' learning needs by encouraging them to see the relevance and importance of their education, while providing flexibility to individuals who must balance, work, life, and family concerns with their education goals. The design of classrooms, public spaces, and resource areas are more closely aligned with a community college than with a traditional high school, allowing for freedom to choose study environments and study groups in an adult environment.

The Excel Center model provides a variety of academic opportunities that fit students' credit needs and learning styles. Students, with direction from staff, determine the pace and content of their academic program, allowing them the freedom to explore life, education, and career goals. Because programming is student-driven and tailored to the local community, the Excel Center culture embraces racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity. The Center relies on student input and feedback to plan its course offerings each term, including Career and Technology Education (CTE) paths toward post-secondary certifications.

Rigor. The Excel Center's academic environment is designed to prepare students for post-secondary education, which requires self-direction, initiative, and personal discipline, but also provides supports by helping overcome life barriers and set realistic goals to continue their progress. Underlying the high expectations for personal accountability and achievement is the attitude that students are fundamentally competent to achieve their goals. This is communicated by teachers, coaches, and staff, and is shared among students who actively support one another. This is especially important to reinforce student intellectual and social development for individuals who "failed" once before in completing a high school diploma.

Relationships. The basis of the life coach model is that people are more likely to be successful in meeting goals with the support and encouragement of at least one other adult. Adult learners benefit from strong relationships with peers and staff which provide consistent support for education, strengthen motivation to achieve goals, and build resiliency to overcome obstacles. Coaches will help students address life barriers and issues that prevent students from being

successful in school. Life coaches are also a critical part of establishing a positive, success-oriented school culture.

Excel Center staff are therefore selected based not only on educational credentials but also on their emotional intelligence and ability to build relationships with adult students. Adults in particular respond better in a learning environment that respects the perspectives, experiences, and views that they bring to the classroom.

Because the staff work with a unique population, non-academic staff development will focus on the ways in which staff can interact with students in creative and productive ways. Staff will also make use of the Excel Center Network to share ideas and best practices on means of promoting student engagement and success. This process will be repeated at the beginning of the new academic year in July, allowing staff to recalibrate and prepare for a new academic year.

2) *A typical school day for a student.* Each Excel Center student has a unique schedule and course progression. To highlight the variety of ways that different students can access The Excel Center's resources, two sample schedules are included for two students with different life situations.

Sample Student Schedule 1

Class Period	**Monday**	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
Period 1	American Studies A	American Studies A	American Studies A	American Studies A	*Off*
Period 2					
Break	*Lunch*	*Lunch*	*Lunch*	*Lunch*	
Period 3	Financial Foundations	Financial Foundations	Financial Foundations	Financial Foundations	Tutoring and Credit Recovery
Period 4	Math B	Math B	Math B	Math B	
Break	*Off*	*Off*	*Off*	*Off*	*Off*
Period 5					
Period 6					
Child Care	*Not needed*	*Not Needed*	*Not Needed*	*Not Needed*	*Not Needed*

This student attends school from 9:00am until 4:00pm each day. This student's schedule includes classes in American Studies A, Financial Foundations and Math B (remediation). The student also works with tutors and completes online credit recovery classes on Fridays.

Sample Student Schedule 2

Class Period	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Period 1					*Off*
Period 2	English 2	English 2	English 2	English 2	
Break	*Lunch*	*Lunch*	*Lunch*	*Lunch*	
Period 3	Math A	Math A	Math A	Math A	
Period 4	*Off*	*Off*	*Off*	*Off*	
Break					
Period 5	Health	Health	Health	Health	
Period 6					
Child Care	10:30am - 2:30pm	10:30am - 2:30pm	10:30am - 2:30pm	10:30am - 2:30pm	*Not needed*

This schedule accommodates a student with a young child who needs to use the drop-in center for childcare while she attends classes. During this time, the student can attend basic skills instruction (English 2 and Math A). Since her mother keeps her child after work, the student returns to the Center to take an online Health class and goes home at 6:30. On Fridays she comes school for tutoring as needed.

1) A typical school day for a mathematics teacher.

- A teacher will arrive at school around 8:00am. He reviews plans for the day's classes until class begins at 9:00am.
- From 9:00am to 12:05pm the teacher leads an Algebra IA course.
- The teacher takes a 50-minute lunch break.
- At 12:55pm, the teacher leads a Math A course which lasts until 2:25pm.
- The teacher then observes a credit recovery course where students conduct online credit recovery and answers student questions from 2:30pm until 4:00pm.
- From 4:00pm until 5:00pm, the teacher reviews the day's work, grades, and data, and prepares for tomorrow's courses.

<u>Supplemental Programming</u>

1) The Excel Center's calendar operates year-round with less than 2 weeks break between the end of the last term of the school year in June and the start of the first term in July. The pace and structure continue during the summer term as during the rest of the school year, operating at full capacity with complete participation of students and staff.

2) The Excel Center does not offer school-sponsored extra- or co-curricular activities, since its target population is adults who are already balancing school with life, work, and family concerns. Although school resources will not be devoted to athletic teams, music groups, or clubs, students are encouraged to create any interest groups they might choose.

3) A unique feature of The Excel Center is its focus on the whole student, including family and work responsibilities, and day-to-day challenges such as housing, transportation, probation meetings, and doctor appointments. Life coaches play the primary role in acting as academic advisor, counselor, mediator, advocate, and resource coordinator for Excel Center students.

Teachers also coordinate with coaches to address student needs and concerns to promote success. Likewise, coaches are the primary liaison between school and the families of Excel Center students, assisting in communications when necessary and including family members whenever possible in celebrating students' successes.

4) A primary student-focused program that is integral to educational plans is Kids Excel which accepts children ages 6 weeks through 12 years (as space allows). This program not only gives students with children the opportunity to focus on their education by providing free on-site care but gives their children a head start on their education through use of the High Scope curriculum. Parents may utilize the childcare any time they are in the Center and must provide their own care materials (formula, diapers, snacks, etc.).

The Excel Center also provides transportation assistance to students as needed in the form of free bus passes for local public transportation. Students must maintain attendance and academic levels and financially qualify for transportation assistance. These two programs have been key to provide adult high school students the necessary support to complete their high school education.

Special Populations and At-Risk Students

1) The Excel Center's unique curricular format, instructional methods, and class structure provide ample support for special student populations, meeting students "where they are." Since academically low-achieving students, students with disabilities, and other at-risk students have higher rates of dropping out of high school than the general population,[xii] it is expected that many of The Excel Center's students will fall into a special population category. Students who were considered at-risk to drop out of high school (and did) are the primary target population.

To accommodate the range of student skill levels, aptitudes and backgrounds, The Excel Center offers flexible coursework (8-week terms, small group instruction, remediation, certification courses) and individualized attention. The goal is to give each student a realistic and attainable path to educational success and sustainable employment. Each student creates an education plan with their life coach. This structure allows students with special needs to receive appropriate support, with their own Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or Section 504 plans. It also provides specialized instruction and support for English Language Learners and Gifted students, as well as remediation to raise student skills to a high school level. Life Coaches provide academic and non-academic support for each individual.

The self-paced nature of the program serves both those with learning disabilities or limited English ability who may need to take one class at a time and those who are gifted and want to accelerate through the program in the least amount of time possible. The relevance of a high school education that leads to valuable career and dual-credit options for post-secondary education increases the chance for employment success for anyone along the spectrum, from those who may need on-the-job coaching assistance to those who have a graduate degree as part of their career plan. The Excel Center maintains high expectations for all its students to adequately prepare them for successful careers after graduation.

2) Students with disabilities will be placed in the least restrictive environment (LRE) possible and will be able to access the accommodations that best suit their abilities. Students receiving

services spend much of their instructional day participating in fixed-length classes alongside the general student population, in small classes which allows an increased level of instructor attention. The remainder of the day they may utilize supplementary services as indicated in their IEP or Section 504 plan. Accessibility options with online curriculum allow students to access the same learning material as other students and work at their own pace.

a) Center staff will identify students with special education needs, beginning with the enrollment application process, complying with IDEA Child Find activities for all students up through age 21. This will include reviewing transcripts, talking with prospective students during application and enrollment, and contacting previous schools for a copy of the most recent IEP (if applicable). Excel Center will also use the Response to Intervention (RTI) process to better identify and support students with learning and behavior needs. If there is a concern by astudent, family, teacher, or other staff member regarding a need for special education services, the RTI team will evaluate students and identify those who qualify as students with disabilities under federal and state criteria.

b) The Excel Center's goal is to provide individualized special services that address each person's strengths and abilities, empowering them to reach their full potential. During orientation, students with a history of special education services will meet with their Teacherof Record (TOR) and special education staff to discuss any services that may be needed.

Individualized services will be identified based on the needs of each student to allow each student remediation and supports as needed to access the general education curriculum and allow them to make progress toward goals outlined in his or her IEP or Section 504 plan. These individualized services may include small group instruction, extended time for instruction or tests and a reduced school day schedule, among other options. Specialized learning environments will also be structured as needed to meet the unique requirements of students with disabilities. Other services that may be made available as it relates to the learning environment include speech and language, occupational, and physical therapy.

The RTI team will serve as the Section 504 Committee within The Excel Center. The committee will develop written Section 504 plans for each student with a disability, stating the nature of concerns, the specific modifications and the related support services that will be provided to the eligible student. Each student will play an active role in the implementation of his/her IEP. The Teacher of Record is responsible for the implementation of each individualized service the student receives, communicating all accommodations and/or medications to other teachers and staff. Life coaches will work closely with the TOR to identify any additional resources necessary to ensure academic success.

c) Students with disabilities will be discussed during the RTI team meetings that take place each Friday to evaluate student progress and address special concerns such as lack of academic progress, counter-productive behaviors or attitudes, or a lack of success with the current IEP/ Section 504 Plan. These plans will be monitored by life coaches and will be distributed by the coach to each instructor who teaches that student. Plans are required to be reviewed annually; however, a plan can be reviewed and amended at any time if the TOR, coach, or student deems it necessary. Each student's life coach will help students manage their learning plans and check in

with students to monitor their progress.

In the rare cases when a student is unsuccessful in making progress toward IEP goals, the RTI committee will meet with the student and family (if applicable) to determine a plan to ensure the student's success in an alternative environment.

d) As the Indiana Department of Education recommends, all students will be encouraged to work towards a Core 40 diploma. In the event a student is unable to pass core classes, despite all available interventions, and after a conference with the student, the RTI team, and family as applicable, students will be permitted to seek a General Education diploma. To complete Excel Center graduation requirements, General Education diploma recipients must also earn a work-related certification that will improve lifelong employability.

With the passage of Graduation Pathways, students are now able to individualize their graduation requirements to align to their postsecondary goal. Students can create pathways that serve their educational interests and prepares them for postsecondary educational and career opportunities.

In the process of earning their high school diploma, Excel Center students learn social skills and job skills needed for the 21st century workplace. Clearly identified transitional services and activities are part of each IEP/ Section 504 plan, including assessments to identify student interests and aptitudes as well as necessary post-secondary or workplace supports that may be needed. The TOR will also connect students to needed supports and assistance after graduating high school, including vocational rehabilitation as applicable. Eligible students may utilize these services through Goodwill if they choose to do so. Through vocational rehabilitation, students have access to college assistance, internships, work experience, job coaches, and job placement.

e) *Teachers.* The Excel Center's special education teachers will be licensed as special education providers and will demonstrate understanding of the unique needs of students with disabilities and special needs. Teachers acting as the TOR will need to be able to use a student-centered approach to tailor learning and service strategies, such as one-on-one instruction, remediation techniques, self-paced lessons, and computer-based tutorials, and will be expected to employ creativity and innovation in their educational approaches. Special education staff will also be required to demonstrate experience with behavior modification techniques, such as coping strategies, social skills, or anger management.

Life Coaches. Trained and compassionate professionals will be hired as Excel Center life coaches. These coaches will work with each student to address life barriers and issues that may have caused their decision to drop out of school and maximize their potential of being successful in their educational program. The life coaches' goal is to keep students engaged and motivated, and constantly moving toward completion of their credits to earn their high school diploma. They work with students to identify potential short-term barriers – such as housing, childcare, transportation, etc. – as well as long-standing issues, such as a lack of self-confidence. Coaches and TORs work closely as a team to facilitate learning plans, activities, and services for all students, including those with an IEP or Section 504 Plan.

Because students all have flexible calendars based upon their unique situations, it is common to adjust plans to accommodate students with identified eligible disabilities. In fact, due to each

student having a unique education plan, special education students may not be identified to classmates as such and may avoid the stigma such students have in a traditional school. All accommodations for students with disabilities are put in place to allow students better access to the general education classroom and curriculum. Instruction strategies will be adjusted to meet the needs of all students, for example, by providing interventions to students by pulling them for small group work during class and reviewing class and test data to adjust on a case- by-case basis.

f) The Excel Centers are student-focused, and teachers are always looking for ways to adapt curriculum and procedures to encourage learning and promote success. Students choose how many classes they can take at one time, based on their capabilities and personal schedule. One-to-one tutoring is available to anyone who requests it. One example of meeting the needs of a student with autism included adjusting the standardized testing schedule to break it up into smaller periods of time to reduce anxiety and increase the chances of success.

3) The Excel Center will meet the needs of English Language Learners (ELL) through Sheltered Instructional Observation Protocol (SIOP), an instructional method which focuses on developing English language skills by interacting with course content.

a) ELL students are first identified as part of their enrollment application process. Students complete a Home Language Survey and can self-disclose any languages spoken at home other than English.

b) Students who indicate any languages spoken at home other than English take the World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) to indicate their English language proficiency. This assessment results will indicate the amount of need for ELL support and measure progress on an annual basis.

ELL students with Lexile scores below 1000 will be enrolled in remedial English courses and progress through basic English skills instruction as they gain mastery. These students will access System 44, a proven foundational reading program, and Read 180 that is used for remedial reading with general education students to help them develop the reading skills necessary to enter high school-level courses.

With the use of SIOP, teachers will plan explicitly for content adaptations for students who are learning English, building background knowledge, creating comprehensible explanations and stacked learning experiences. ELL students will also have access to additional review opportunities prior to mastery assessments.

Additionally, whenever possible, bilingual life coaches will be provided to ensure adequate communication of expectations, progress, and challenges.

c) The Excel Center holds high expectations for ELL student achievement and continuously monitors ELL student progress through their classwork, formal and informal assessments, and test results, adjusting instructional planning as applicable based on student progress. When a student can achieve English language skills at a Lexile level 1000 on the Reading Inventory (RI),

they will exit ELL services. Collective data on diagnostic and formative assessments, credit attainment and intermediate grades will be used to determine whether the school is providing sufficient supports for English Language Learners.

d) The Excel Center will provide professional learning opportunities to increase teachers' capacity to enrich language development. Teachers will support and learn from each other in a way that recognizes the interdependency of language proficiency and content instruction. Teachers whose students include ELLs will also receive professional development in the SIOP Model, which helps teachers plan and deliver lessons that allow English learners to acquire academic knowledge as they develop English language proficiency. In addition to content objectives, complementary language objectives address what language is needed for students to know to engage with the academic content.

Comparison of Content and Language Objectives[xiii]

	Content Objectives	**Language Objectives**
Overall focus	Based upon ICCRAS for the content areas in the given subject.	Address what language skills a student needs to engage the content objectives, perform tasks, and achieve objectives.
Hint verbs and resources	Recognized by verbs related to knowledge of the content area: ***identify, analyze, rank, construct, graph, divide, solve, visualize, design.***	Language resources include key vocabulary, language functions or ways students use language in the lesson, grammar or language structures, and language learning strategies: ***read, write, listen, list, tell, discuss, journal, record, persuade, debate, draft.***

Whenever possible, bilingual teachers will be hired in communities where the concentration of ELLs are particularly high.

4) A student who enrolls in an Excel Center having dropped out of another school may continue to face many of the risk factors that led to leaving school the first time. Grade level groupings have little bearing on how a student progress through The Excel Center. Almost all the students may be "below grade level," whether dropping out of school left a student far behind his or her cohort, or time away from school has left a student "out of practice" with academic material.

Many students will arrive at The Excel Center in need of significant remediation at levels far below high school-level work. Using standardized assessments, as well as review of student transcripts (as applicable), The Excel Center staff will identify the learning needs of students. Diagnostic assessments administered at intake in The Excel Center Network reveal that 70% of students test below a sixth-grade skill level in math, and 45% score below a sixth-grade level in reading.

The Excel Center utilizes RTI, a multi-step approach to providing services and interventions to students who struggle with learning at increasing levels of intensity. This involves determining whether students are learning and progressing optimally in areas of academics, social interactions, emotional growth, and behavior. Identification of the level of intervention needed

by each student is based on standardized assessments, such as the RI for reading and the Excel-Designed Math Assessment (EDMA), a custom math assessment developed for the Excel Centers.

Tier I interventions provide evidence-based, differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students. Teachers ensure that 80-90% of all students are academically successful with universal interventions. If fewer than 80% of students are successfully mastering the course content, Center administration and teachers will evaluate the core curriculum and instructional practices.

Students who are demonstrating below 80% proficiency of standards with core instruction alone are prioritized for Tier II intervention. Teachers provide small group supplemental instruction and other additional interventions as needed to this population which generally makes up 5-10% of students, monitoring their academic progress more closely than Tier I students.

Tier III interventions are reserved for 1-5% of students who require intense interventions. Teachers may need to provide individualized instruction focused on specific skill deficits to these students in addition to core instruction, with increased monitoring of academic progress.

Tier III coursework relies heavily on computer-integrated resources, including System 44 and Read 180 for English 1 & 2 and the EDMA-based Math A & B. Each of these courses provide personal learning progression for students and data on skill development for teachers. These programs are aligned with Indiana Standards, ready students for secondary level coursework, allow students to earn elective credits.

Continued interventions are offered if they contribute to academic progress. If students are unable to demonstrate academic growth through ongoing assessments over two terms, even after extensive intervention, they may be referred to an outside provider for Special Education testing.

5) Students who enter The Excel Center with high levels of academic achievement (as measured by diagnostic assessments at intake) may be considered intellectually gifted. The needs of intellectually gifted students include the ability to exercise critical thinking skills, express creativity, and share ideas.[xiv]

a) Gifted students will be encouraged to explore educational options at the post-secondary level through dual credit classes offered in cooperation with Ivy Tech. This requires students to take the Knowledge Assessment Exam. If the student is co-enrolled, his or her college tuition will be covered by The Excel Center. Dual enrollment allows for an accelerated progression through post-secondary coursework which increases the likelihood of degree completion. Advanced coursework will also meet the intellectually gifted individual's need for academic challenges. As with other students, instructional strategies will be customized to encourage gifted students to explore their potential for challenging careers, including internships.

b) The life coach is a critical support to ensure all students are academically successful, which includes ensuring they are properly challenged to maintain motivation to complete classwork. The life coach work with instructional staff to provide educational opportunities that fit a gifted student.

c) The progress of intellectually gifted students will be assessed and monitored through standardized assessments, including Knowledge Assessment. College-bound students will also be supported in post-secondary assessment tests such as the ACT and SAT and encouraged to accumulate as many college credits as possible as they complete their high school diploma.

6) The Excel Centers is a classroom-based model. While virtual instruction has been provided as a necessity under COVID-19-related restrictions during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, this is not an ongoing plan for delivering instruction or education-related services.

Student Recruitment and Enrollment

1) At full capacity, Excel Center- Elkhart will enroll 250 students. The Excel Center's individualized approach works best in a small-school environment, giving adult students flexibility to learn at his or her own pace and providing an intimate setting designed to promote meaningful relationships of support between staff and students. Staff are also able to engage in consistent communication to operate effectively and efficiently.

Although access to Excel Centers will be available to any adult who would like to complete their high school diploma, research shows that minority (African American and Hispanic) and foreign-born student groups are more likely to drop out of school. Children of low-education parents, academically low-achieving students, students with disabilities, and other at-risk youth all have higher rates of not completing school than others.[xv] With its focus on adults who have not graduated from high school, The Excel Center will intentionally seek out prospective students from these under-represented groups. With thousands of individuals lacking a high school diploma in Elkhart County, the pool of prospective students to fill 250 available seats is substantial.

The Excel Center- Elkhart marketing plan will be based on GLI's previous experience in opening Excel Centers. The School Director and staff will be responsible for student recruitment for the school and will be assisted by Goodwill's community engagement staff in the development and execution of the school's marketing plan.

GLI anticipates recruiting through several new and existing community channels:

- *Outreach to current and prospective partner organizations.* Several meetings have been held with key political and educational stakeholders in Gary, East Chicago, and Elkhart to explain the aim of The Excel Center and its target student population. These meetings have laid the groundwork for future collaborative discussions through the planning, implementation, and operational phases of each new school. Additional connections are being made with GIM's workforce development programs and their social service partners in each community. Once its charters are approved, GLI will share The Excel Center concept with a broader number of organizations with special emphasis on new partners in business, government, education, and faith-based networks whose work focuses on underserved populations. This will expand the ability to place students in the appropriate setting to meet their current needs and future training and/or matriculation goals.

- *News media releases.* Information announcing The Excel Center as a new school option, school enrollment and application requirements will be released to all local media channels, including television, radio and print media. In addition to regular news coverage, The Excel Center will seek guest spots on the news, talk shows, and feature segments. Radio and television ads will also be purchased in the Chicagoland and South Bend markets.

- *Public information meetings.* To supplement other strategies, several community-based informational meetings will be held to allow direct interaction with prospective students and allow them to meet staff, ask questions and pick up enrollment application materials. Target locations for public information meetings will include libraries, community centers, and on-site open houses.

- *Social media.* GLI will update its current website to include information regarding new locations, academic program descriptions, enrollment information, application forms, and frequently asked questions. Prospective Excel students can apply online. Facebook and email blasts will be utilized to disseminate opening dates and enrollment information.

- *Word of mouth.* Since its inception in 2010, strong word of mouth by successful Excel Center graduates and their families has been the most successful recruitment tool for attracting student applicants.

The Excel Center will market itself as a tuition-free adult high school, with benefits that exceed that of the traditional HSE. It will also market the free drop-in childcare center and public transportation assistance.

2) Since Excel Center- Elkhart is not based in Indianapolis, the unified enrollment system does not apply.

3) Please see **Attachment 9** for The Excel Centers' Enrollment Policy, which includes admission and orientation requirements, enrollment deadlines based on term start dates, lottery procedures and waiting lists, and policies regarding withdrawals and re-enrollment.

4) The Excel Center- Elkhart does not meet the definition of a virtual charter school.

<u>Student Discipline</u>

1) Since the Excel Center is an adult high school, in which students choose to enroll (as opposed to being required by law), student discipline is less of an issue than in a traditional high school. Adult students are expected to always demonstrate personal accountability and consideration for others, as is expected in college and workplace environments. The purpose of disciplinary action at the Excel Center is to ensure that both individual students and the school community remain focused on growth and learning.

If a conduct issue arises, progressive discipline will be used to assist the student in understanding that a performance problem and opportunity for improvement exists, and to assist the student in

demonstrating improved behavior. Violence or illegal activities will not be tolerated to protect the safety of students and integrity of the school. Serious infractions will be thoroughly investigated and require a hearing prior to disciplinary action. All corrective actions will be monitored by the School Director to ensure legal and policy compliance.

2) Please see **Attachment 10** for the Excel Centers' Discipline Policy. Adult students are trusted to follow policies and procedures unless evidence is produced that indicates otherwise. Positive behavior is promoted with attendance and performance incentives and publicly recognizing student accomplishments.

Grievance Policy

Please see **Attachment 11** for a copy of the Excel Centers' Grievance Policy. The policy describes the process the school will use to address complaints or concerns about Excel Center or GLI Board policies, practices, or administrative procedures.

Parents and Community

1) The Excel Center is a unique education option for adult students to attend high school and earn a high school diploma, offering on-site classroom education to adult students. The Excel Center model has been proven more than 7 years to produce successful graduates in Indiana communities. High school completion options for adults are limited. The following programs are the only options Elkhart County adult residents currently must complete a high school diploma or equivalent:

- Achieve Virtual Education Academy: Online Adult High School Diploma
  Enrollment: 338
  Letter Grade: D
- Horizon Education Alliance Adult Program: HSE Program
- Elkhart Community Schools Community Education: HSE Classes

2) In Elkhart, there are 8,730 adults who lack a high school diploma and could potentially benefit from an Excel Center in their community[xvi]. Although an HSE or credit recovery program provides needed credentials to a small percentage of high school dropouts, The Excel Center offers an educational experience that prepares students for post-secondary programs and/or increased career opportunities. In South Bend, 12,070 adults lack a high school diploma[xvii]. Excel Center- South Bend met its maximum enrollment of 350 within three years of opening and continues to achieve an average enrollment of 250 or higher. This success in the adjacent county, as well as the need expressed by representatives of Elkhart Community Schools, will contribute to the ability to meet enrollment projections.

3) Since the Excel Center is an adult school, it is doubtful that many parents of students will be directly involved in the school. Engagement activities, such as open houses, will be focused on prospective students looking for a second chance to complete their high school education. With student permission (or if a student has a legal guardian), family members may be encouraged to meet with teachers and coaches to collaborate on solutions to academic and non-academic

barriers to success. Family members will also be encouraged to participate in celebration events such as graduation. Additionally, any member of the community may apply to volunteer as a tutor at an Excel Center.

4) The Excel Center provides Kids Excel childcare to any student who is a parent or legal guardian of a child aged 12 and under. Transportation assistance is also offered in the form of free public transportation bus passes or Uber/ Lyft credits in cases where transportation issues may prevent student attendance. Life coaches are very resourceful and quickly connect with community agencies on behalf of their students, no matter what barriers to family well-being or student success arise.

As an affiliate of Goodwill, Excel Center staff will be able to work with workforce development staff who run programs serving ex-offenders, at-risk youth, first-time mothers, and other underserved populations to find solutions to non-academic challenges. Additionally, GLI will be able to build on Goodwill- established partnerships with local businesses for job training and placement, and access social service organizations to provide housing, counseling, legal aid, and other needs.

GLI also plans to partner with Ivy Tech Community College to increase educational opportunities for students and leverage business relationships made as members of the Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce.

5) Please see **Attachment 12** for evidence of community demand, engagement, and support from local social service agencies. The attached letters reflect meetings with community leaders in the three target communities that have demonstrated a genuine interest and support for the potential positive impact Excel Centers will have in their communities. Please see pages 2 and 3 in the Executive Summary for a complete list of community contacts.

Community partners will be critical to the school's success. To date, The Excel Center has garnered significant community support for the school and will continue to engage with the community. A detailed plan to accomplish successful community engagement during the school's pre-opening period and leading into the school's first year is also outlined in **Attachment 16**, Start Up Plan.

Performance Management

1) To support student progress, The Excel Center will create a supportive environment that promotes flexible and individualized learning while adult learners manage the various demands and challenges of work and life. The Excel Center- Elkhart will be held to the same performance standards as GLI Excel Centers in South Bend, Gary, and Hammond, and other Excel Centers authorized by ICSB.

The anticipated student population faces significant academic and non-academic challenges. School-specific goals mirror the challenges of working with this target population. Due to the uniqueness of The Excel Center model, the ISBOE has approved alternative accountability metrics to hold Excel Centers accountable to high performance standards.

The table below outlines the academic performance goals of the school.

Academic Performance Goal	Measure
The Excel Center will enable students who have dropped out of school or who are at high risk of dropping out to earn a high school diploma.	The school will have at least a 70% graduation rate (as measured by ISBOE's approved modified, non-cohort-based graduation rate*).
Students at The Excel Center will meet the same rigorous standards for achievement and high school graduation as students in a traditional high school setting.	At least 90% of all graduates will have passed all mandatory state assessments, graduating without a waiver.
Students who graduate from The Excel Center will demonstrate the ability to succeed in post- secondary academic environments.	At least 80% of The Excel Center's graduates will graduate having either earned college credit or an industrial certification.

*Calculated by taking the number of graduates in a given school year divided by the school's average ADM count for that year, multiplied times four years of traditional high schools

The Excel Center school will not organize data at the cohort level. A student who has dropped out of school and then returned no longer has a cohort; students arrive and finish at various times at The Excel Center. Performance goals reflect the mission of the school by focusing on rapid student progress, graduating from high school, and connecting students to post-secondary education.

On an ongoing basis, school-wide data indicators will be used to monitor whether the school environment is providing sufficient academic opportunities for students who enroll in the school. School-wide attendance metrics, credit attainment, and assessment scores are all used to ensure that the school is operating effectively and that there are not any major performance difficulties affecting the school. Annual indicators – the total number of graduates for the given year, and the percentage who obtain college credits or certifications – provide an ongoing metric of how many individuals have achieved The Excel Center's primary goal of graduating students who have not previously succeeded in completing high school. The post-secondary enrollment metrics indicate whether students are prepared for either the workforce or continuing their education beyond The Excel Center.

On an annual and term-wide basis, The Excel Center measures the progress that students make in reaching their educational goals. In addition to higher-level attendance analysis, the School Director will lead the staff in evaluating the pace that students are earning credit, including their progress in current courses and toward graduation, noting that a consistent pace of credit attainment towards graduation indicates progress. The long-term success of individual students is related to whether students can graduate (as measured by credit attainment and passing end-of-course assessments) and whether students enroll and complete and/or persist in post- secondary education. Staff will also measure graduation attainment and make every attempt to monitor the post-secondary success of students who graduate.

2) The Excel Center will administer regular testing to assess student learning needs and monitor academic growth, beginning with administering baseline placement assessments upon

enrollment. Placement assessments in humanities include the RI and the Phonics Inventory (PI) for students whose Lexile measure is below 600; placement assessments in mathematics include the Excel Center EDMA. The WIDA will also be administered to ELL students to assess the need for English language services.

Course placement will be determined based on these assessments and a review of previous high school transcripts. Each student's education plan will detail any basic skills development that should take place for students to perform at or above a high school level. For those who are engaged in remedial work, assessments will be made each term to determine student progress.

3) Students with dual enrollment at Ivy Tech or who are planning enrollment at other post-secondary institutions, must pass the Knowledge Assessment test. The collection, analysis, and sharing of data is critical to the success of The Excel Center and its students. Teachers, staff, and leaders will use Synergy Solutions as the school's student information system (SIS) to collect and enter student data for the school. As part of the iExcel orientation process, staff will collect student demographic information, record transcripts, and organize student data. As classes are underway, teachers will record attendance and grades through Synergy.

Management of student data is the responsibility of the registrar, Caitlin Cline. The registrar reviews data entered by each location for quality and completeness and requests changes made by staff at the local level in cases where data are incomplete or entered incorrectly. The registrar will submit all required state reports on a timely basis. Data reports will be available to the school community as upon request.

The Excel Center will receive data reports from the Excel Network, and do data analysis of school performance data gathered through Synergy system. The School Director will generate reports necessary for staff to perform ongoing assessments of school performance, highlighting attendance, grades, and credit attainment at both school-wide and class groupings.

4) The information system the school will use to manage student performance data is Synergy, a nationally recognized SIS. Data from Synergy allows Center staff to use the reporting interface and analytical tools that available to all schools in The Excel Center Network.

The School Director will be responsible for interpreting assessments and reports for classroom teachers and coaches, providing data via dashboards and ad-hoc reports that provide additional insights to patterns and indicators, making it easier for teachers and the school leader to make data-informed adjustments to the school's academic program. The dashboards provide an easy-to-follow presentation of current performance.

The data warehouse dashboards were designed by Excel Center teachers and school personnel to meet the specific needs of The Excel Center model, allowing staff to analyze key factors that drive academic performance across a multiple of variables (test scores, student demographics, attendance, discipline, etc.). Data analysis within the Excel Centers have been used to identify which students were in danger of not passing classes, allowing teachers and coaches to reallocate resources to ensure student success.

5) The Excel Center Scheduling and Support Coordinator will support the training and

implementation of the data analysis in Excel Centers, instructing all teachers in how the data and software can be navigated to make data-informed decisions on academic progress, identify student groups who may require alternate instruction, and evaluate the effectiveness of the current curriculum and instructional practices.

The Excel Center Network will be available to answer questions related to school performance across the entire network, comparing performance across locations, and doing deep analysis into why certain schools perform better than others or suggesting ways to improve performance among special student populations. The summary results of these reports will be shared with every school in the network, giving school leaders insights on where high-performing best practices may be found.

It is a key priority of the professional development plan to equip school staff to use and analyze data to improve instruction. Excel Center staff will be trained in the use of data management to inform the RISE Evaluation and Development System. Teachers will learn how to use assessment data to plan their curriculum, track student data, and analyze progress. They will then be evaluated on their ability to use data to develop and improve their instructional practices.

6) Data will be used to monitor progress at the individual student, classroom, and school levels. If progress falls short of Excel Center, ICSB, or Indiana goals, an array of strategies may take place to improve student outcomes.

Student. Assessment data will reveal if student progress is off track in meeting grade expectations or progress. In these cases, staff will meet to discuss alternate ways of providing supports for students, including increasing the amount of one-on-one attention a student receives; altering the balance of online credit recovery and classroom instruction; working with the coach to identify life barriers that may be impeding academic progress; or altering the pace at which the student is learning.

Classroom. Poor performance indicates that instructional staff have not been successful at encouraging student growth, or that current instructional methods are not effective. If data indicate students are not demonstrating mastery, then the instructor needs additional supports to bring students up to standards. In the rare instance of extremely poor performance, it may be necessary to move a teacher into another assignment and have alternate staff work on achieving better outcomes.

School. Consistently poor performance may be the result of several factors, including organizational culture, poor process orientation, and leadership deficiencies. The Excel Center would be assessed to ensure it is operating in fidelity to The Excel Center model, and what tools may be needed to improve school performance. Interventions may include intensive trainings, peer mentoring among Directors, and hands-on management for the school if performance is not successful. In cases where a school consistently falls short of expectations, the Board or VP of Excel Centers may deem it necessary to find other leadership to operate the school.

Section III: Implementation Plan

Legal Status and Governing Documents

1) Please see **Attachment 13** for copies of governance documents for GLI, Inc., including:
   a) IRS 501(c)(3) Determination Letter
   b) Articles of Incorporation
   c) Board Bylaws
   d) Code of Ethics
   e) Conflict of Interest policy.

2) Please see Article X of GLI's Articles of Incorporation, which includes a dissolution clause, in **Attachment 13**.

3) Please see **Attachment 14** for completed Statement of Assurances form, signed by Cynthia Cavanaugh, authorized representative of GLI.

School Staffing Structure

Please see **Attachment 15** for an organizational chart for Excel Center- Elkhart at Year 1 and at Full Capacity. The chart identifies all administrative, operational, instructional and non-instructional personnel, as well as paraprofessionals or specialty teachers, delineating roles and responsibilities of the governing board and staff.

School Leadership & Staff Hiring, Management and Evaluation

1) The Excel Center has a School Director in-training at its South Bend location. The VP of Excel Centers will work with him to provide leadership over the school opening process and recruit, hire, and train new teachers. In accordance with the requirements of IC 20-24-6-5, potential teaching staff candidates will have licensing verified.

Key selection criteria for new teachers will be:

- history of high performance either as a teacher or education student
- social science background and/or a demonstrated compassion for the underserved
- interest in and/or aptitude for adult education, including high emotional intelligence
- experience in and/or knowledge of a variety of instructional strategies
- creative problem solving and critical thinking skills
- ability to adapt quickly to new environments or circumstances
- desire for continuous learning and improvement
- positive attitude and history of encouraging others

To hire high quality staff, The Excel Center's initial strategy will be to recruit individuals with a track record of high performance from within The Excel Center network. The Excel Center will also use traditional recruitment strategies such as job posting on the IDOE job bank, Goodwill's website, Indeed, LinkedIn, and other job sites; and attending career fairs at local colleges and universities. New staff will be selected after interviews with school leadership and peer panels.

2) The staffing plan provides teachers with easy access to instructional experts and streamlines the academic program of the school, essential for the school to operate effectively in 8-week terms. The Director will provide overall leadership, accountability, and access to data. The Lead Teacher will act as the academic leader and mentor teacher to other instructional staff, providing expertise in curriculum and instruction strategies as well as accountability. Working in both interdisciplinary and departmental teams, teaching staff will be best prepared to receive immediate feedback on their instructional practices and develop appropriate strategies to best serve students.

Coaches will support teaching staff by providing student feedback and participating in education planning. Staff will also regularly meet to discuss student data to identify areas that need improvement and to make quick adjustments during the school year. This combination of teamwork, process improvement, and adaptability will ensure that every student at each Center has access to excellent teaching.

The Excel Center model is an innovative adult education solution. It incorporates technologies through a comprehensive data warehousing system which allows staff to evaluate individual and class data to improve outcomes. Teachers and staff take on roles not normally found in traditional schools. Teachers co-teach interdisciplinary classes and adjust instructional techniques to address student needs. Coaches provide wrap-around support, helping students meet academic and non-academic challenges. Support staff, such as the special education coordinator, work with teachers and coaches in ensure the best possible student outcomes.

3) The Excel Center network utilizes the RISE teacher evaluation rubric as a means of monitoring the effectiveness of best practices in the classroom. All instructional staff are evaluated at a minimum of five times per school year (at least once per term) with the summative scores from these evaluations determining the instructor's annual raise, bonus, and rehire eligibility for the upcoming school year. School administrators will conduct at least 2 formal observations throughout the school year; informal evaluations will be frequent and based on observations and self-reporting of progress through a term and will be more frequent as the Excel Center- Elkhart opens. If a teacher requires a performance improvement plan due to a low score on any of the five evaluations, they may be subjected to further evaluations throughout the school year. Instructors, regardless of evaluation status, may request more observations throughout the school year.

The VP will evaluate the School Director based on their performance on the RISE evaluation rubric, the attainment of school performance goals, and an annual performance and development review. Likewise, teachers will be held accountable by the School Director for their performance under the same guidelines, except their focus will be on student performance within their classrooms. The Lead Teacher will assist in these evaluations as appropriate.

The RISE evaluation for classroom instruction can be broken up into four key components measuring different aspects of teacher effectiveness. Each Center has the discretion to use professional judgement in how they implement the RISE rubric. It is important that teachers are evaluated using multiple measures, such as instructional observations, student achievement, and

school-wide learning measures.

- Purposeful planning, including the use of data when creating lesson plans
- Classroom instruction, engagement, and behavior management
- Teacher leadership within the school and willingness to collaborate with peers
- Core professionalism such as attendance, punctuality, adhering to school policy, and respect for students, peers, and school administration.

Teachers are also asked to develop Class Learning Objectives and Targeted Learning Objectives to collect student growth data as compared to student learning objectives and differentiate instruction to ensure the success of all students. Teachers will be evaluated based on student growth measured at the end of the term through summative assessments such as teacher-designed finals or a certification exam. The instructor will also be evaluated by the school's accountability rating by the IDOE.

As the VP of the Excel Centers is responsible for ensuring that all Centers are running effectively, efficiently, and producing high student performance results, GLI's Board of Directors ultimately holds her accountable. The VP bears the responsibility of holding each Director accountable for the performance of their Excel Center site; the Director ensures performance of teachers at his or her Center.

4) For those staff members who are placed on an improvement plan, it is the responsibility of the immediate supervisor (Lead Teacher, Director, or VP) to provide concrete action steps for the instructor to follow to move their overall score to "effective". If an instructor is on an improvement plan for more than one term, the director will discuss this with school and organization leadership to determine the appropriate next steps, which may include forfeiting their eligibility for rehire.

All employees are required to work according to the Excel Center's basic principles and in accordance with the employee handbook. Failure to abide by The Excel Center's standards of conduct will lead to disciplinary action, including termination of employment.

Whenever leadership or teacher changes can be anticipated, current staff members will train their replacements. Succession plans are built into the fabric of each Center, encouraging increased development and responsibilities for consistent high performers to groom them for promotion to the next level. Additionally, the team-based format of instruction will allow for mentoring within departmental and education plan teams to bring new hires up to speed.

School leadership members utilize evaluation data to determine the professional development needs of individual instructors, as well as areas of growth for their entire instructional team. Continuous learning is a value of The Excel Center model, and staff members will be encouraged to pursue professional development and share best practices within their teams and the larger network.

5) Employees of The Excel Center will be employed by Goodwill LEADS. They will be at-will employees and not use contracts. Base-level salaries for Excel Center positions are listed below. The salaries for staff will be on par and competitive with the salaries of the local school

corporations where each Center is located.

Position	**Base-Level Salary**
School Director	$65,000
Lead Teacher	$55,000
Teacher	$42,000
Special Education Instructor	$42,000
Lead Coach	$40,000
Life Coach	$37,000
Office Manager	$37,000
Kids Excel Director	$48,000
Childcare Attendant	$20,800

The following are the basic benefit programs in which full-time employees may participate:

- Comprehensive Health Plan (2 options)
- Employee Life Insurance
- Comprehensive Dental/Vision Plan
- Section 125 Plan
  - Pre-tax Health & Dental/Vision Plan premiums are available when you enroll
- Retirement:
  - 403(b) Retirement Savings Plan
  - Teacher Retirement Fund
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Tuition Reimbursement
- PTO/ Vacation Days

The Excel Center incentive program aims to reward high-performing teachers by increasing their compensation. Teachers who are identified as "highly effective" during their RISE evaluation are eligible for a performance-based bonus, as funds are available; "effective" and "highly effective" teachers are eligible for merit-based raises.

Professional Development

1) The School Director ultimately ensures the implementation of the professional development plan and facilitates the professional learning process. The VP, with input from the Excel Network and School Directors, will craft professional development plans, materials and resources based on local school needs as determined by teacher evaluation and student achievement results. Lead teacher(s) at the school will assist the director in facilitating and modeling professional learning experiences and providing feedback as teachers implement novel practices.

The Excel Center will incorporate job-embedded and student-focused professional growth opportunities into all components of professional development to attain continuous instructional improvement focused on student achievement. For example, during year one of school operation,

internal professional development focuses on implementation of the core instructional strategies essential for meeting the needs of adult high school students. In subsequent years, teacher evaluation results combined with student achievement data will drive the professional development scope and sequence, leading to a professional development plan that includes opportunities for school-wide and individualized professional learning.

The Excel Center- Elkhart does not plan on providing virtual instruction in whole or in part.

2) When a new School Director is hired, he or she will undergo a series of professional development trainings, including time spent in established Excel Centers. This initial training series provides an overview of the school model, including its mission, vision, and core values. School and class observations will give new Directors a clear sense of student needs, roles of staff members, and school culture as well as course and classroom structure compared to a traditional school environment. Directors will also develop an awareness of the data tools and resources available.

The Director will attend an iExcel to better understand the school opening and student orientation process and participate in available trainings developed by the Excel Network. Additionally, Directors will be invited to attend monthly meetings with other Excel Center leaders. This collaboration will ensure that all sites are implementing best practices, while also looking to grow school leaders professionally.

Cynthia Cavanaugh, the VP, will meet every two weeks with the Director to discuss performance metrics, responsibilities, staffing, budget, data metrics, opportunities for improvement and development. After the first year, these meetings may decrease to monthly, based on the competency and experience of the Director.

3) Excel Center professional development is designed to help teachers improve instruction and relationships with their student population. Both objectives are important to create a flexible yet rigorous educational program that promotes the achievement and success of each student enrolled, no matter where they start their journey.

4) At the beginning of the new school year, new staff will undergo a week orientation:

- **Day 1:** Staff retreat and team building
- **Day 2:** Adult student population & poverty simulation
  Orientation to The Excel Center, staff and student handbooks
- **Day 3:** Tour of GIM and key areas; Training on online credit recovery
  Operational introductions (IT, online testing, transcripts)
- **Day 4:** Coaching practices, Special Education, and ELL
  Curriculum training and blended courses
- **Day 5:** Contextualized learning and career pathways
  Tours of industry partners and staff collaboration

During the five days of professional development, teachers will work with experienced Excel Center instructors and coaches to learn about the unique social, cognitive, personal dimensions of the students. Teachers will learn about the gradual release of responsibility instructional

strategy and become deeply familiar with their curricula and best practices for content delivery. During the first ten days, teachers will familiarize themselves with school policies and learn how to use the student information and learning management systems.

The intensive five days of professional learning will prepare all teachers and staff for a highly productive school year. All professional learning experiences are participant-centered and provide time for interaction, questions, and the development of strategies and materials that may be immediately implemented in the classroom.

5) During the school year, an additional ten days are dedicated to professional development related to the school curriculum and instructional practices, teacher collaboration and planning, and refinement of practices for the purposes of continuous improvement. These professional development days will be dedicated to addressing any issues that arise throughout the school year and following routine data analysis of student achievement results, including credit attainment, performance on assessments, performance in the classroom, and attendance.

Teachers do not have scheduled classes on Fridays and may use that time for teacher preparation and staff collaboration. There are 38 Fridays scheduled as planning days in the proposed 2021-2022 school calendar, and they are designated for staff to hold meetings, plan lessons, establish collaborative plans, hold special education conferences, and meet one-on-one with students.

Lead teachers and lead coaches routinely lead data meetings to discuss school-wide, caseload, and individual student results. Because the lead teacher does not teach a full course load, he or she has time to prepare data and create meeting agendas for maximum effectiveness. The director and lead teacher facilitate the instructional improvement meetings, and prepare focused, data driven, highly effective learning experiences for teachers.

6) The professional development program will be evaluated based on school-wide and classroom achievement measures, as well as student improvement on interim assessments. Additionally, staff members will be encouraged to provide feedback on the effectiveness of professional development in improving their ability to promote student success.

Start-Up and Operations

1) Please see **Attachment 16**, for a detailed start-up plan for the period leading up to the first day of student attendance for the proposed school, including planning tasks and individuals responsible for each task. The projected start date for Excel Center- Elkhart is July 2021.

2) The Excel Centers do not provide transportation for students, due to the extended hours of operation and schedules that vary widely student-to-student, based on their unique abilities and/or family and work obligations. The school will use several options for student transportation:

Biking/ Walking. The goal would be to open the Excel Center in an area with significant need, where potential students already live and work. This would allow the school to be within walking or biking distance of many students.

Public Transportation. The Interurban Trolley provides public transit services in Elkhart and Goshen, Indiana, administered by the Michiana Area Council of Governments. It is a five-route system that covers downtown Elkhart and extends in a radius of approximately 6 miles from the city center. It also connects with Transpo, the South Bend public transportation system. For students with income limitations (less than 185% of federal poverty guidelines), bus passes will be provided as needed.

Private Vehicles. As adults, many students will either own cars or have access to them and will be able to transport themselves to and from school. The close-knit student community also lends itself to carpool arrangements.

The new schools do not anticipate scheduling extracurricular events like field trips or athletic events, although college visits will be encouraged. Although the MVHAA does not apply to adults, staff members will connect any student with supports needed to maintain school enrollment, including housing assistance and bus passes. Elkhart has a complementary paratransit service called Interurban Trolley Access which runs ADA-compliant services that meet IDEA requirements. The special education coordinator will ensure transportation is adequate and note any supports in the IEP or Section 504 plan.

3) The safety and security of students, staff, the facility, and all school property is a top priority for Excel Centers, and school leadership will take every step necessary to ensure that students and staff are prepared for any foreseen or unforeseen emergency, disaster, or threat. To that end, Excel Centers have an Emergency Response Procedure Handbook which outlines the school's plans and procedures in the event of a fire or other environmental disaster, tornado, earthquake, nuclear or chemical contamination, any event concerning guns/weapons, a hostage situation, bomb threat, suspicious vehicle, riot/civil unrest, or other emergency requiring a school lockdown or evacuation. As required by law, each Center will participate in mandatory fire, tornado, and lockdown drills. A copy of The Excel Center's Emergency Response Procedure Handbook is provided to all staff and available to ICSB at any time upon request.

Each school will have a full-time security officer who will monitor the entrance and scan active security camera feeds located throughout the school. The Excel Center will employ both an employee- and student acceptable use policy concerning technology and internet use, which will be communicated in the staff and student handbooks. The purpose of school-provided Internet access is to facilitate communications in support of research and education, and the acceptable use of electronic resources will be monitored by staff.

4) The Excel Center does not meet the ICSB definition of a blended learning of virtual charter school.

5) Please see **Attachment 17 for** an estimate from an insurance agent for property and casualty insurance coverage that aligns with ICSB insurance requirements.

<u>Facility Plan</u>

1) For Elkhart, GLI is in the process of identifying facilities. A potential site has been identified within the Freshman Academy of Elkhart High School at 1 Blazer Blvd., Elkhart.

Any renovations that may be needed in selected school sites will be financed through a loan with Goodwill and incorporated into the cost of the lease, when applicable. In the same way that GLI managed compliance with state and local health and safety requirements when managing a $1.2 million build-out for the Excel Center- South Bend, transforming a former engineering building into an adult school equipped to serve 350 adults, it will have the capacity to manage compliance with any such requirements for all new schools. The experience will also inform projections for all facility- related costs.

2) The Excel Centers have not identified a facility yet.

3) The school will not be in Indianapolis.

Budget and Finance

As an affiliate of Goodwill, GLI has a designated account manage accounting, purchasing, payroll, and the required audit, supported by GIM's CFO and support staff. Strict financial controls set in place at Goodwill will ensure long-term financial viability.

1) Please see **Attachment 18** for a detailed 5-year pro-forma budget for the school, including a start-up budget.

2) Please see **Attachment 19**, for a budget narrative that describes assumptions, revenue estimates, staffing levels, facilities expenses, technology costs, and contingency plan.

3) GLI has been a nonprofit since 2014 and will be the charter holder and governing entity for Excel Center- Elkhart. Please see **Attachment 20** for the most recent internal financial statements including balance sheets and income statements for both Goodwill and GLI, and the last three years of audited financial statements and management letters for both Goodwill and GLI.

Section IV: Portfolio Review and Performance Record

1) See **Attachment 21** for the Academic Performance Workbook for all Northern Indiana Excel Centers.

2) Each tab of the Academic Performance Workbook, **Attachment 21**, includes a summary and data of Excel Centers located in South Bend, Hammond, and Gary.

3) No contracts with charter schools have been terminated by either GLI or the Excel Centers.

4) There are no charter revocations, non-renewals, shortened or conditional renewals, or withdrawals/non openings of schools operated by GLI.

5) There are no performance deficiencies or compliance violations that have led to formal authorizer intervention with any school operated by GLI in the last three years.

6) See **Attachment 22** for current or past litigation, including arbitration proceedings, that has involved GLI or The Excel Centers.

Submission of Full Application

Please see **Attachment 23** for a PDF file that contains all application components, including the Proposal Overview, the Proposal Narrative, and all required Attachments.

Footnotes

[i] United States Census Bureau American Community Survey (2019). *Educational Attainment 2019 ACS Survey 1-Year Estimates Table S1501*. Retrieved from https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=education%20by%20geography&g=0500000US18039&tid=ACSST1Y2019.S1501

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[iii] United States Census Bureau American Community Survey (2019). *Language Spoken at Home 2019 ACS Survey 1-Year Estimates Table S1601*. Retrieved from https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=language&g=0500000US18039&tid=ACSST1Y2019.S1601

[iv] Bridgeland, J.M., Dilulio, J.J. & Morison, K.B. (March 2006). *The silent epidemic: Perspectives of high school dropouts*. Washington DC: Civic Enterprises, LLC. Retrieved from https://docs.gatesfoundation.org/Documents/TheSilentEpidemic3-06Final.pdf

[v] United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019). *Unemployment rates and earning rates by educational attainment, 2019.* Retrieved from http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm

[vi] Harris, L., & Ganzglass, E. (2008). *Creating Postsecondary Pathways to Good Jobs for Young High School Dropouts: The Possibilities and the Challenges* Washington, DC: Center for American Progress. Retrieved from http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/0438.pdf

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[x] Complete College America (2011). *Time is the Enemy: The surprising truth about why today's college students aren't graduating ... and what needs to change.* Washington DC: Complete College America. Retrieved from http://www.completecollege.org/docs/Time_Is_The_Enemy.pdf

[xi]Brookfield, S.D. (1987). *Developing critical thinkers: Challenging adults to explore alternative ways of thinking and acting*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

[xii] National Center on Secondary Education and Training (2014). *Dropout and graduation frequently asked questions*. Retrieved from http://www.ncset.org/topics/dropout/faqs.asp?topic=36

[xiii] Center for Applied Linguistics (n.d.). *Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol Frequently Asked Questions*. Retrieved from http://www.cal.org/siop/faqs/index.html

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[xvi] United States Census Bureau American Community Survey (2019). *Educational Attainment 2019 ACS Survey 5-Year Estimates Table S1501*. Retrieved from https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=education%20by%20geography&g=1600000US1820728&tid=ACSST5Y2019.S1501

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