

**Section 4. Applicant and Founder Information**

**Explain the Founding Team’s collective qualifications for establishing high-quality schools in New Jersey and assuming stewardship of public funds. Include individual and collective qualifications for implementing the school design successfully, including capacity in areas such as: School leadership, administration, and governance; Curriculum, instruction, and assessment; Performance management; Parent and community engagement; Professional development; General operations; Facilities management; Financial management; and Fundraising and development;**

The Founders of Ocean Academy Charter School represent the interests of multiple stakeholders in the Lakewood community and in the state: parents, teachers, community civic and religious leaders, and school administrators. They were chosen because of their belief in the need for an alternative to the failing public school system and their unwavering belief and commitment to the charter school’s mission.

Collectively, the Founders have over 100 years in teaching, administrative, and governance experience in public schools; this includes over 15 years in Charter Schools. Overall, the founders have experience in the area of operations management, instruction, curriculum, assessment, special education, governance, fiscal management, facilities, fundraising, and personnel.

In addition, the Founders have strong direct and indirect experience through teaching, administrating, tutoring, advocating, and working with the English Language Learning community of Lakewood. Several of the Founders are of Hispanic/Latino decent and were themselves English Language Learners at one time.

The Founders of Ocean Academy Charter School realize the great importance of effective leadership as it is the most important indicator of success of any venture. The school’s success hinges on the daily leadership of the administrator and the “big picture” direction of the governing board.

The Founders also value having teachers and former teachers on the Board. Most notably, Founder Anita Lepelstat received the 2001 N.J. Governor’s Award for Excellence in Education and she has experience in both traditional public schools and charters (she worked 3 years at Foundations Academy Charter School in Trenton). Founder Danielle Desmarais also has extensive teaching experience in a charter school which as similar demographics to Lakewood in Title One constituency. Founder Marshall White has been a teacher as well as a vice principal for over 30 years. Founder Valarie Smith was a primary grade art teacher at Christ the King School in Haddonfield, NJ.

**School leadership, administration, and governance;**

Founder Marshall White holds the following N.J. Certifications which contribute to school leadership and administration; Elementary Teacher, Teacher of the Handicapped, Teacher of the Blind and Visually Impaired, Nursery School Teacher, Supervisor, and Principal. Marshall was Vice Principal of two of Lakewood’s public schools for 15 years and has extensive experience working with the English Language Learning community which comprises of a large percent of Lakewood’s public school student population.

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Anita Lepelstat has supervisory experience at a graduate program at Kean University in preparing students for careers in special education, specifically in the areas of language development.

Danielle Desmarais has eight years experience with New Beginning Family Academy Charter School in Bridgeport, Connecticut as a teacher and served as the teacher representative on the school's Board of Directors. As the teacher representative, Danielle developed action plans to foster school growth and to secure Charter renewal as authorized by the Connecticut State Board of Education.

Lorna Hassel was one of the original founders of the Renaissance Regional Leadership Academy Charter School of Pemberton, N.J. and served as its Head of School. Before that she was principal of a private school for 25 years.

Lead Founder Valarie Smith served on the Cherry Hill Board of Education and was assigned to the Board's Finance Committee and the Board's Policy Committee. She also has a proficient background and experience in federal and state education policy and governance. Ms. Smith is also the founder and director of a public school non-profit organization that advocates for the Interdistrict School Choice Program on behalf of its participating schools membership.

The Founding Board has two attorneys. Christopher Leddy, Esq. has experience in education law as well as employment and labor law. Patricia Bombelyn, Esq. is experienced as an attorney to the Academy for Urban Leadership Charter School in Perth Amboy, N.J. Ms. Bombelyn also served as a trustee of the Greater New Brunswick Charter School in New Brunswick, N.J.

#### **Curriculum, instruction, and assessment;**

Danielle Desmarais, Lorna Hassel, Anita Lepelstat, and Marshall White all have experience in curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Danielle Desmarais collaborated with her colleagues at New Beginnings Family Academy Charter School to develop math pacing guides for grades K-8. As Lead Teacher, she assisted and supported teachers in K-4 with classroom challenges and areas in need of improvement.

As Head of School of Renaissance Regional Leadership Academy Charter School, Lorna Hassel led the school's remedial academic program which resulted in the school's student growth rate outperforming 80% of schools statewide and 93% of schools their peer group. The state ranked Renaissance Regional Leadership Academy's performance "very high" in January 2014. This showed that Renaissance students were learning well above the typical rate.

Anita Lepelstat brings early intervention experience for students with special needs to Ocean Academy Charter School. Ms. Lepelstat served as a supervisor at the Early Intervention Program associated with the Somerset County ARC (Association of Retarded Citizens). The Arc of Somerset County serves individuals with developmental disabilities and their families from birth through the senior years of life through their many programs and services in Somerset

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County. This is an excellent reference point for Ocean Academy Charter School in light of the demographics of the population the school will be serving.

As Director of Government Relations and Strategic Initiatives of the N.J. Department of Education, Valarie Smith was one of the co-founders of New Jersey United for Higher School Standards, an association charged with promoting and educating the general constituency about the newly established Core Curriculum Content Standards and New Jersey's new statewide assessment program.

#### **Performance management:**

The Founders of First Ocean Academy Charter School view performance management as a shared workforce belief about what is to be achieved at an organizational level as evidenced by our mission and vision statements. This will require the Board to regularly address the student performance and the overall performance of the school.

As former administrator, Marshall Ellison White has the experience and knowledge it takes to help format a systematic process to reach the school's strategic goals, objectives, and priorities. She has had to employ such methodology in the past as a vice principal.

Former Head of School, Lorna Hassel has employed performance management to the greatest extent when turning around Renaissance Regional Leadership Academy Charter School when she was advised that students were lagging behind academically. She implemented a successful remedial plan based on individual and school-wide data which resulted in the school's student growth rate outperforming 80% of the schools statewide and 93% of schools in the peer group.

#### **Parent and community engagement:**

Ocean Academy Charter School has many founders with experience in parent and community engagement.

Pastor Glenn Wilson leads the parent/community group United Neighbors Improving Today's Equality (U.N.I.T.E.) U.N.I.T.E. was formed to protect the rights of Lakewood public school students to be afforded equal opportunities in education. The organization systematically issues e-mail alerts, press releases, and updates to their Facebook page and maintains a large email data base for notifications. They have built a strong organizational structure through good communications and outreach.

Founder Ken Seda has extensive backgrounds in parent outreach through the Supplemental Education Services program he helped to run for Lakewood Public School Students.

As an active parent in Lakewood Public Schools, Founder Roxanne Martin's concerns are parent outreach and engagement. Roxanne has been a parent advocate for several years in trying to improve Lakewood Public Schools.

Valarie Smith has years of professional and volunteer experience in parent and community engagement. As a volunteer, she helps with communication outreach for the drop-out recovery program CERN (Camden Education Resource Network) in Camden, NJ. As Co-Director of the N.J. Interdistrict Public School Choice Association, she is charged with community and government outreach/engagement.

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All members of this team of Founders have experience with the demographics of the community the school will be serving. In particular, Pastor Juan Monge-Santiago of All Saints Episcopal Church runs a church based food pantry, soup kitchen, and thrift store. In addition, Rev. Juan is a member of the Hispanic Commission of the Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey.

#### **Professional development:**

The Founders of Ocean Academy Charter School believe that professional development opportunities for educators, administrators, and board members are vital to creating a school culture where students can achieve high standards. For students to meet high standards in education there must be high standards for all. Ongoing effective professional development is one way that a school can support teachers and staff and encourage improved teaching and learning. Board member will also participate in professional development.

As an education consultant, Valarie Smith works with a non-profit organization which administers the federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant for 5 New Jersey Charter Schools. The grant addresses professional development, uses the Danielson Framework, and fully compliments the state's teacher evaluation structure. The grant also addresses performance management, governance, and school leadership.

In addition, Marshall White and Lorna Hassel have backgrounds in planning and implementing professional development for teachers and school staff.

#### **General operations:**

Both Marshall White and Lorna Hassel bring experience in a school's general operations. Their experiences and knowledge will be of great help to the charter school in establishing and ensuring good operating procedures.

Lorna Hassel brings 30 years experience in overseeing the daily operations and functions as Principal of King's Academy of Wrightstown, NJ as well as her experience of a charter Head of School.

#### **Facilities management:**

As a former Trustee of the Greater Brunswick Charter School, Patricia Bombelyn has first hand and extensive experience of facility issues with charter schools. As attorney for the Urban Leadership Academy Charter School in Perth Amboy, NJ, Ms. Bombelyn has helped to guide their Board in obtaining, leasing, and renovating an unused Catholic School.

Lorna Hassel also has extensive experience with charter school facilities management which includes leasing and the day to day operations of a facility.

Father Juan Monge-Santiago manages All Saints Episcopal Church in Lakewood which includes a soup kitchen, food pantry, and thrift store. Formally, he was a member of the Board of Directors of the Episcopal Diocese of Puerto Rico. In this position, Rev. Juan was responsible for overseeing the proper use of all buildings, properties, and facilities which included three hospitals, four schools, fifty congregations, various satellite offices for the hospice and home care system, the diocesan office building complex, and other facilities belonging to the Diocese.

**Financial management; and**

Ken Seda has been professionally involved in financial management positions for over ten years.

Marshall White is the Treasure of Christ United Methodist Church in Lakewood.

Both attorneys Christopher Leddy and Patricia Bombelyn will help guide the board and ensure compliance on New Jersey's Administrative Code covering financial management and accounting.

Lorna Hassel has the background in helping to establish a charter school budget and stay within its parameters. She also has firsthand knowledge as to the flow of funds through the state and local school district. She has had a school business administrator report to her in her position of Head of School of the Renaissance Regional Leadership Charter School.

As the Priest in Charge of All Saints Episcopal Church, Father Juan Monge-Santiago has the responsibilities of financial management of the Church. Pastor Glenn Wilson has similar responsibilities of the Restoration Family Worship Center.

**Fundraising and development;**

As President of the Puerto Rican Civic Association (non-profit), Ken Seda is proficient in fundraising. For the last several years, Ken has put together two festivals, one in the spring and another in the fall, for the Hispanic/Latino Lakewood Community. Ken solicits funding for the fairs from many sources and has raised tens of thousands of dollars to produce the fairs and to earn a profit for the Association's operating expenses. These festivals have been very successful and thousands of people attend.

Both Pastor Wilson and Father Juan Monge-Santiago have ongoing fund raising responsibilities for their churches and are very familiar with the process of raising funds for non-profits.

The Board of Founders has discussed potential plans for fund raising and development. The Board is looking to various local organizations that may be of financial help to the school. The Board plans to look to cultivate long-term and continuous relationships with various organizations that may provide financial help and possibly in-kind services.

In conclusion of this section, the Board of Ocean Academy Charter School has a strong unwavering belief in the school's mission and core values. Its members are a diverse group of qualified and experienced individuals representing teachers, administrators, parents, and community activists. The Board is fully aware that good governance is an essential component in the school's success and pledges complete alignment to the State's *The Quality Single Accountability Continuum's* requirements in operations management, instruction & program, governance, fiscal management, and personnel.

- a) **Provide signed and completed statements of assurances, included as Exhibit 1a, from each Founding Team member.**

**Exhibit 1a attached as requested.**