

PHASE I: Letter of Intent

Created Thursday, February 05, 2015

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Applicant groups and Existing Education Corporations interested in submitting an application to establish Regents-authorized charter schools are asked to complete this brief information sheet. The Department will use this information to plan and coordinate peer review panels with appropriate expertise to evaluate all application materials.

Please indicate whether an Applicant Group or an Existing Education Corporation is submitting this Round 1 Letter of Intent.

Applicant Group LOI to establish a single, brand new charter school

Proposed Charter School Name

(Please write out the formal and full name for the school you proposed, and include the words "charter" and "school" in the proposed name(s)).

School Name	YouthBuild Community Charter School of New York
Grades Served (K-5, .6-8, 9-12, etc.) During Initial Term	
Number of Students During Initial Term	125

Proposed or Current Board Chair and Public Contact information, including mailing address, phone number, and email address.

(The entire chart may not be visible on your screen. Use the "tab" key to move from column to column. The first column will remain static as you do so).

	First and Last Name	Best Phone Number (###-###-####)	Email Address
Proposed/Current Board Chair	Peter Stoll		

If available, please provide the URL to the website established for the proposed school or existing education corporation.

(No response)

Proposed Management and/or Partner Organization(s), such as a charter or educational management company or a university, academic program partner, or whole school change partner.

(See pages 45-46 of the application kit for definitions and guidance as only "substantial" partnerships should be listed here).

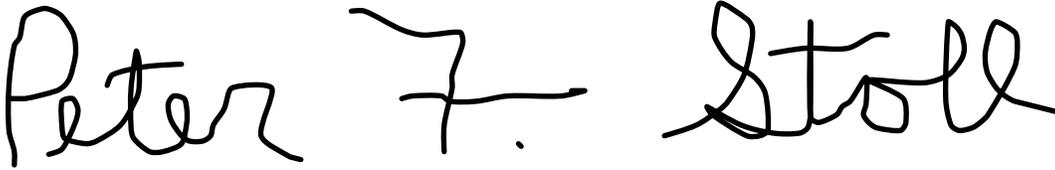
Proposed Management Company
Partner Organization 1
Partner Organization 2

Lead Applicant(s) Signature and Date

Use your PC mouse or your mobile device stylus to sign your name below.

Lead or Co-Applicant listed in section c above.

(Internet Explorer may not support this feature. Open the portal using Google Chrome, Firefox, or Safari).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter F. Stoll". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and a distinct 'F'.

Date Signed (Lead or Co-Applicant)

2015/02/10

Thank you for completing this survey so that the Department may plan its review panel accordingly.

Youth Action Programs and Homes, Inc., in consortium with YouthBuild programs across New York State, proposes a new, innovative charter school, with its first site to be located in East Harlem, in Manhattan, and to be called the **YouthBuild Community Charter School of New York**.

The high school dropout rate in East Harlem and other low-income communities is an urgent problem. According to census data projections, in the 13th Congressional District of New York there are approximately 13,000 school-aged kids (5-19) who are not enrolled in school.¹ According to a state-by-state study of high school graduation rates conducted in 2012, black and Latino males in New York State have an abysmal 37% graduation rate²; the 13th Congressional District is 83.9% black and Latino. Additionally, with a 13.4% unemployment rate (7.8% higher than the national average), there is a median income of \$33,607 (nearly \$20,000 less than the national median income³). Fully 18.2% of the district's households make under than \$10,000.⁴ These numbers represent people who would not have a chance to benefit from any current efforts for early intervention, including those of elementary charter schools; they have already been left behind. There are young people in our communities who need a new kind of opportunity now. YouthBuild has been serving these populations for decades and is ready to expand its impact.

YouthBuild, which originated in 1978 in East Harlem, provides opportunities to out of school, out of work youth to gain high school equivalency, job training, community service experience, and leadership development in a comprehensive, community-based program. The successful YouthBuild model for youth to find pathways to higher education and employment has been replicated at 264 sites around the United States, and now in 15 countries. In New York State, with 36 years of experience and operations, and 4,410 students served across 18 sites ranging from Long Island to Buffalo, YouthBuild programs are looking to build upon this work to serve more youth and offer the opportunity to earn high school diplomas.

YouthBuild Community Charter School of New York students will participate in a competency-based curriculum at a school that draws its best practices from the community- and data-driven YouthBuild model and broad successes of the Philadelphia YouthBuild Charter School in Pennsylvania and the YouthBuild Charter School of California, which now includes 18 sites across California with an average of about 100 students per school site. We intend, as in California, to establish a YouthBuild Charter Network in New York State, to provide every YouthBuild program with the opportunity to expand its reach as a charter school, eventually serving more than 1000 youth each year in total. We will begin in East Harlem, in close partnership with YouthBuild programs in Schenectady and Poughkeepsie that are preparing to establish schools in the first two years, and with more YouthBuild programs preparing to follow suit.

Mission and School Design

The mission of the YouthBuild Community Charter School of New York is to provide out-of-school, out-of-work youth with the broadest range of tools, supports, and opportunities to become self-sufficient, responsible, and leaders of their communities.

¹ "Fast Facts for Congress," United States Census Bureau, accessed January 2015, <http://www.census.gov/fastfacts/>

² "The Urgency of Now: New York," Schott Foundation for Public Education, accessed February 2015, <http://blackboysreport.org/state-reports/new-york>

³ "US Household Income," Department of Numbers, accessed February 2015, <http://www.deptofnumbers.com/income/us/>

⁴ "Fast Facts for Congress"

The establishment of a charter school would allow the YouthBuild model to expand and improve its impact as we could hold students to higher standards, hire a full, diverse group of innovative educators, and change the narrative for youth who do not succeed in traditional academic settings. To achieve our mission, over a 12-18 month period, students will participate in **vocational training and community service, braced by a competency-based academic curriculum**. Students will amass a portfolio of work corresponding to their curricular achievements indicating their attainment of core competencies in **reading, writing, and math** directly linked to the next steps in their educations and careers.

Though all of our students will have dropped out of school at different times for various reasons, in order to graduate students' portfolios must meet the **competency standards set by the TASC**, the exam selected by the New York State Regents Board, developed in partnership with Southern New Hampshire Universities, College for America. Our contextualized academic curriculum will contain units of classroom learning in which students complete projects connected to their vocational tracks that engage topics in Language Arts: Reading and Writing; Math; Science; and Social Studies.

In addition to rigorous academic classes, students will participate in **construction training**, continuing the YouthBuild program's tradition of construction of affordable housing. YouthBuild's construction training engages students in hands-on learning that can lead to important life skills and employment while directly serving their community's need for affordable housing. After Youth Action YouthBuild students gain OSHA and CPR certifications and carpentry instruction, students then pursue any of a variety of certifications including security, home health aide service, barista, and construction. We plan to continue and strengthen these possibilities in the Charter School.

As in our current YouthBuild program, development of **resilience, respect, and civic engagement** will be essential for each student to successfully earn a high school diploma. We intend to continue YouthBuild's active promotion of such qualities through leadership development and community service. This includes the annual Mental Toughness orientation; continuous support through individual and group counseling and case management; and regular community service projects including civic engagement. Through the thoughtful integration of our three primary components – academics, vocational training, and leadership development – our students will be empowered through hard work in a holistic and challenging learning environment, while carrying on the YouthBuild tradition of growing and giving back at the same time.

Proposed Student Population, Enrollment, and Retention

Consistent with YouthBuild student populations nationwide, including those at the YouthBuild Charter School of California, we intend to enroll students aged 16-24. Therefore we will propose a waiver of rule to permit matriculation of students up to age 24 (see page 3). All students will be unenrolled in high school without having received a diploma at the time of application. We intend to serve 125 students per year. For the first-year site in East Harlem we anticipate that a majority will be from within the 13th Congressional District, which encompasses a large section of northern Manhattan and part of the South Bronx.

In recent years, approximately 200 young people apply or are referred to Youth Action YouthBuild's current program for only 35 slots. Given our experience with a variety of effective outreach strategies and our deep roots in the community, we are confident in finding and attracting a sufficient student population. Typically more than 50% of current YouthBuild East Harlem students reside in NYCHA housing. Through word of mouth and more targeted recruitment approaches on-site in NYCHA projects we consistently find young people invested in their futures

who were unable to succeed in public schools due to obstacles including **unidentified disabilities, lack of English proficiency, and the countless impacts of poverty** including hunger (all of our students are eligible for free lunches). We are in a unique position to serve these populations due to years of operating comprehensive YouthBuild programs helping young people pursue career and education driven futures through training, work experience, and counseling.

Considering that our students will have dropped out at various times, each demonstrating a variety of strengths and needs, the YouthBuild Community Charter School of NY will not be structured through traditional age-based grade-levels. Similar to our counterparts at YouthBuild Charter School of Philadelphia, our classes will have no more than 15 students per teacher, and our teachers will be supported as they meet each student where they are. This support will include special education professionals, and since each student will receive individual attention by educators and case managers. Our school offers a unique opportunity to minimize the stigma of the impacts of learning disabilities and other impediments to learning and socialization.

The balance of academics with construction training and industry certifications with the support of individualized case management and character-building programs like Mental Toughness, yields positive retention rates for our current program in East Harlem: our program graduation rate is 81%. The national high school graduation is currently 80%⁵, and all of our students are recruited from among the 20% percent. Over 35 years of YouthBuild programs producing positive outcomes have given our staff and support networks time to hone best practices. This often includes quick thinking and adapting over the course of a program year to ensure that the majority of students can succeed. Establishing a charter school will give us the opportunity to further develop and cement these practices in a more formal school environment.

Accommodating Our Student Population

In order to best serve our target population we request two waivers from the NY State Board of Regents. The first waiver is to extend the age range of eligible students up to the age of 24. In our experience, students in the 22-24 age range may have experienced a lot of pain and disappointment already, but are capable of starting anew; are eager to get it right, and should not be pushed away. They have often just reached the maturity to correct past errors and take their lives seriously. YouthBuild programs, including the Charter School in California, successfully serve older students year after year, and we hope to extend that opportunity at YouthBuild Community Charter School of NY as well.

The second waiver is an exemption from the five New York State Regents Examinations. This is essential to implement our competency-based curriculum, which offers the best chance for the future success of our students. The YouthBuild Community Charter School of NY curriculum features a strong academic component, and the school will directly prepare its students for work through certification-based vocational training, and invest the students in community service activities to foment leadership and civic responsibility. This dynamic combination represents an essential thread through the 35-year YouthBuild experience in NYS and across the country, and it responds directly to the needs and demands of the students, their communities, and their eventual employers. We believe these achievements justify a high school diploma.

Through the innovative project-based curriculum, students will attain English Language Arts and Mathematics competencies, based on TASC standards, and demonstrate them through substantial group work and individual portfolios. By focusing the integrated academic curriculum on core competencies, collaboration, and critical thinking, students will be prepared for higher

⁵ “Public High School Four-Year On-Time Graduation Rates and Event Dropout Rates,” U.S. Department of Education, accessed February 2015, <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014391.pdf>

education. This curricular model has yielded excellent outcomes in Philadelphia, as the Philadelphia YouthBuild Charter School has a graduation rate of 73% over the last five years, with an average of 80% of students placed in jobs or in college within six months of graduation. By shaping the curriculum around college-approved standards, such as the TASC, in tandem with vocational training and leadership development, students are adequately prepared for whichever next step they choose, but are assessed in such a way that embraces their learning styles and addresses previous experiences in formal education. To require the subject-based Regents Examinations of our students would be antithetical to our curricular framework.

Beyond the curricular dissonance of the Regents Exams with our approach, testing of this nature would make it difficult to maintain a culture of achievement and growth. It is of the utmost importance that the school's environment promotes success as opposed to threatening failure, thereby inverting a norm that has not served this young, out of work, out of school, and in many cases court-involved population. According to Advocates for Children, "Research indicates that the negative effects of exit exams are actually underestimated ['for at risk youth'], as students may preemptively drop out of school before being exposed to feared exams."⁶ We want to take advantage of the potential flexibility and promotion of innovation in the charter school system to tailor an academic curriculum to the needs of our students. Many of their learning styles, based on cultural background and experience, do not necessarily align with the linear and verbal education that is reflected in Regents exams. A waiver from such requirements will greatly improve our students' chances for long-term success.

Community Outreach

Community outreach efforts began two years ago. In 2013 we established an Advisory Council of esteemed educators drawn from East Harlem, New York State, and our YouthBuild networks. On December 10, 2013, Youth Action Executive Director David Calvert, Development Coordinator Jake Obstfeld, and Case Manager Lillie Steed formally presented the proposal at a **public meeting of the Youth and Education Committee of Community Board 11** which serves East Harlem. The agendas for such meetings are posted online one month in advance, and eight community members were present along with the committee members. The Community Board is highly familiar with the YouthBuild output and commitment over the past three decades of production, and the proposal to transform the program into a school was received favorably. The only concern advanced by community members was some skepticism that the NYC Department of Education would invest in such a school. By pursuing a partnership with the State and moving forward to open a path to high school graduation and beyond, we address community concerns and confront skepticism by succeeding.

In January 2015 we rigorously sought feedback from current YouthBuild students, our intended student population, and their communities. While the average incoming high school student in New York City has some degree of parent involvement, many of our students come to YouthBuild with little family support, and often on their own volition. We needed to know if they would attend a YouthBuild charter school; 90% said yes. Surveys were administered primarily in East Harlem and Poughkeepsie in a combination of online and paper surveys. Of the 79 responses recorded by submission, 82% consider the dropout rate in their communities an urgent problem and 69% either do not know or do not think there are adequate opportunities for young dropouts in their communities. Nearly 85% either do not know or agree that the Regents exams are a serious

⁶ "Rethinking Pathways to High School Graduation in New York State," Advocates for Children of New York, published December 2013, accessed January 2015, http://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/rethinking_pathways_to_graduation.pdf?pt=1

barrier to graduation. This includes the vast majority of respondents who are current students. In response to whether it was easier to gain employment with a diploma vs. a GED/TASC certification, the majority of respondents who stated they had either less than a high school diploma or that they achieved high school equivalency reported employment as more attainable with a diploma. Whether or not this stigma has material realities, it may cause young people to think a GED is worthless, or even upon achievement, they might not have the same level of confidence in finding work as someone with a high school diploma. Overall, nearly all of our responses indicate that a YouthBuild Charter School, where students could learn reading, writing, and math skills while gaining industry certifications and leadership skills and attain a high school diploma would be a positive institution for their community.

Proposed Site

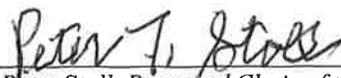
Supportive Children's Advocacy Network has offered space among its many available locations to house our school. The most propitious of the proposed locations is LaGuardia House at 307 E. 116th Street in the heart of El Barrio/East Harlem, for the YouthBuild Community Charter School of NY. This facility will exist alongside existing facilities around East Harlem, currently owned and operated by Youth Action Programs and Homes, which will be available for use for administrative and additional educational needs. Upon approval of the charter we will act on obtaining a lease and orienting the school facility.

Applicant Group and Board of Trustees

Our primary applicant group includes executive, staff, affiliated persons, and Board members of YouthBuild programs across New York State. Our incoming Board of Trustees reflects our institutional support from existing YouthBuild programs and YouthBuild USA, and our broad reach across New York State. Our Board includes Peter Stoll, a key partner throughout our planning process who is Chief of Strategic Planning and Business Development at North Rivers Family Services in Schenectady, NY; Scott Emerick, Senior Vice President for Education, Careers, and Service Pathways for YouthBuild USA; Johnny Rivera, who has served on YAPH's board since 2009 and is currently Director of Community and Government Affairs for Harlem RBI/Dream Charter School; Jennifer Lawrence Executive Director of Programs for YouthBuild Schenectady; and David Calvert, Director of Strategic Partnerships for YouthBuild programs in New York.

The rest of the applicant group includes Youth Action YouthBuild Executive Director Robert Taylor and Development Associate Toby Irving. Robert Wright contributed from YouthBuild Poughkeepsie, particularly in community outreach. Our strength as an applicant group is supported by our ability to consult with existing YouthBuild charter schools around the nation as we model our overall structure using best practices from California and Philadelphia. The school's founding and administrative nucleus will be in New York City at Youth Action Programs and Homes. YAPH will be responsible for nominating further Trustees to the YouthBuild Community Charter School of NY Board, to support its growth to 7-9 members, diversifying representation of expertise along with race, gender, and age to best serve our students and staff.

Signed,


Peter Stoll, Proposed Chair of the Board


Date

NAME OF APPLICANT GROUP MEMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS	CURRENT EMPLOYMENT
Peter Stoll	[REDACTED]	Chief Strategy Officer at North Rivers Family Services
Johnny Rivera	[REDACTED]	Director of Community and G
Scott Emerick	[REDACTED]	Senior VP of Education, Caree
David Calvert	[REDACTED]	Director of Strategic Partners
Jennifer Lawrence	[REDACTED]	Executive Program Director, Y
Toby Irving	[REDACTED]	AmeriCorps VISTA Developme
Rebecca Paavola	[REDACTED]	Director of Programs, YouthB
Robert Wright	[REDACTED]	Excutive Director, Nubian Dire
Robert Taylor	[REDACTED]	Executive Director, Youth Act

TABLE 1: APPLICANT GROUP INFORMATION***Minimum of 5 members must be designated as Trustees**

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE, SKILLS, AND ROLE ON APPLICANT GROUP (Key Words)	PROPOSED ROLE (if any) (Trustee, Employee, Consultant, or None Continuing Role)	PROPOSED POSITION ON THE BOARD (e.g., officer, trustee, or constituent representative)	LENGTH OF INITIAL TERM	VOTING MEMBER (YES OR NO)
Decades-long career in education, service to at-risk learners, and business; experienced advisor on Applicant Group	Trustee	Board Chair	1-3 years	Yes
Community engagement/	Trustee	Board member	1 year	Yes
20 years; education and n	Trustee	Board member	1-3 years	Yes
Founding staff for YB; par	Trustee, public contact	Board member	1-3 years	Yes
Currently operates a succ	Trustee	Board member	1-3 years	Yes
Undergraduate research;	N/A	N/A	N/A	No
11 years of YouthBuild; YE	N/A	N/A	N/A	No
Director of YB/AmeriCorp	N/A	N/A	N/A	No
Organizational administra	Maintain process from YAY	N/A	N/A	No