PHASE I: Letter of Intent

Created: 06/19/2015
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Basic Contact and Application Information

Page 1

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	Sofara International Charter School
Grades Served (K-5, .6-8, 9-12, etc.) During Initial Term	K-6
Number of Students During Initial Term	350

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	Kevin G. Wells, Esq.	[redacted]	[redacted]
Public/Media Contact Person	Nadhedge Ptah	646-644-0300	info@sofarainternational.org

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

www.sofarainternational.org

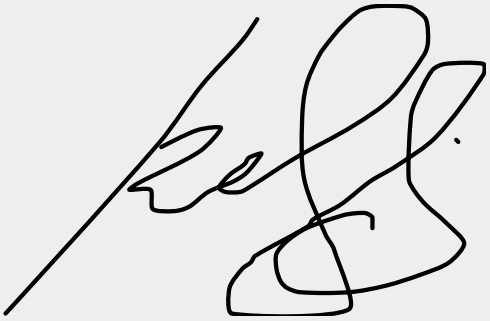
Proposed Management and/or Partner Organization(s), such as a charter or educational management company or a university, academic program partner, or whole school change partner.

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

Proposed Management Company	(No response)
Partner Organization 1	(No response)
Partner Organization 2	(No response)

Proposed Board Chair Signature

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



Date

2015/06/21

Thank you for completing this form.

SOFARA INTERNATIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL

1) Applicant Group Information (*sections a) / b) see Table 1***)**

c) Public Contact- Nadhege Ptah; SofaraOutreach@gmail.com, (212) 591-0299 or (646) 644-0300

d) ***Application history*** - An application for the Sofara International Charter School was submitted and withdrawn from NYSED in the 2014 RFP and Round 1 of the 2015 RFP. Erika Williams was a founding Board member of The Kindezi Charter School, authorized by the Georgia Dept. of Educ. in 2006, which is operational and expanding with a 2nd location opening Sept. 2015. Ismael Colon, as Principal of FLI Charter School, participated in the renewal of its charter through the NYCDOE that was renewed for a three year term.

2) Proposed Charter School Information

a) Proposed School Name - **Sofara International Charter School (SICS)**

b) Proposed School Location - NYC Community School District 5 in DOE space in accordance with current rules, regulations, and guidelines. If DOE space is unavailable, SICS has identified viable private locations to lease.

c) Planned grades and enrollment in the proposed charter term K-2 year 1 adding 50 students each year, growing to grade 6 in year five, which aligns to the International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Program (PYP). In years 2 through 5, 3% attrition is accounted for. SICS' enrollment ensures proper growth of both the program and the school structure, allowing in-depth, school-wide, growth analysis to take place on a consistent basis aligned to IB standards as well as the NYS CCLS.

Grades	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-2021
K	50	50	50	50	50
1	50	50	50	50	50
2	50	50	50	50	50
3		48	48	48	48
4			46	46	46
5				44	44
6					42
Total	150	198	244	288	330

d) Proposed Management and/or Partner Organization - While not a traditional partnership, the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), through guidance on practices and principles, offers quality control as the IB program authorizer.

e) School Mission - Sofara International Charter School will graduate every student with strong literacy, math, science and second language skills, and a strong sense of international-mindedness giving them the ability to be successful **in college, career, and real life** as future leaders in their community and global society.

f) School Overview - SICS's educational program is designed as a K-6 International Baccalaureate (IB) World School, implementing the internationally renowned, research-based best practices and principles of their Primary Years Program (PYP). Inquiry-led applied learning is the hallmark of an IB program and addresses the academic, intellectual, social and emotional realms of learning. The IB framework allows ***every*** student, regardless of ability level, to gain a balance of skills useful in successful navigation of college, career and real life. SICS' program will be supported with guidance from the IBO and the local authorized IB network of high performing schools. SICS intends to expand into the full K-12 IB continuum, but is focused on developing the principles and practices of the PYP K-6 program in the first charter term.

The key elements under the umbrella of the IB PYP framework are below:

* An **international focus** is the hallmark of all IB schools and is infused into all that students experience. Not only do students gain a strong sense of self, but also a sense of their place in a

global society. A SICS student will explore content through a comparative approach that includes both local and global perspectives. For example, a study of environments can extend into what varying cultures eat around the world. All content and class exploration are used as an opportunity to extend student thinking and broaden their perspectives.

* **Dual language** capability is an integral part of the international focus embedded within the IB framework, manifested as the acquisition of a second language. It is a unique aspect of the rigorous IB framework that promotes international perspective and cultural awareness. And ultimately it enables students to be leaders on a global scale. The underlying understanding was captured by Nelson Mandela who stated, "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart." SICS students, therefore, have the goal of becoming fully biliterate and bilingual through an intensive focus, beginning in Kindergarten, on foreign language. Through second language acquisition, they will heighten the mastery of cognitive skills and abilities, aptitude, and habits of learning that in turn improve student academic progress.

Based on the needs of the CSD 5 foreign language student population, SICS has chosen the very successful Gomez 50/50 Content Model for its English-French dual language component. The 50/50 content model will not put at-risk students at further risk, but will actually ensure competency in literacy in both languages as it promotes the fortification of native language while acquiring a second language.

*__Inquiry teaching and learning__ is accomplished through the lens of science and social studies and further reinforced in all other subjects. This trans-disciplinary approach is accomplished by using six specific thematic "Units of Inquiry" per year. Each Unit of Inquiry revolves around an overarching theme, such as Sharing the Planet, and is anchored by a central idea derived from real-life. Each Unit of Inquiry provides an opportunity to achieve depth of knowledge, as students are guided in the use of diverse resources to collect and analyze details, evidence, and facts in alignment with current Common Core Learning Standards.

* **Applied Learning** represents the opportunity to apply what is being learned as it allows students to synthesize knowledge and understandings. Attached to each Unit of Inquiry will be hands-on learning, performance tasks and activities or applied learning projects that promote the trans-disciplinary journey through the content areas and into the larger world. This provides students with a platform for deep discussion of content. IB trained teachers, using Universal Designs for Learning, will guide students to identify and research questions and issues; students will then apply their newly gained knowledge, research data, and skills to generate solutions to scenarios and problems of concern to them. Students will also have the opportunity to extend and test out ideas as part of their dedicated Library Lab time.

* The building of **skills, attributes and attitudes** is a focusing tenet of the IB frameworks. They are pervasive throughout the curriculum as points of perspective from which to view content, themselves, and the world. There are the 10 Learner Profile Attributes, 12 attitudes and 5 overarching skills. Attributes include concepts such as maintaining balance in what we do and knowing how and when to be a risk-taker. Attitudes address notions such as integrity and appreciation while skills speak to actions such as how to research and self-manage. The skills, attributes and attitudes are also a defining feature of school culture and environment.

* The **IB Coordinator,** as part of SICS meeting quality control for the International Baccalaureate Organization, will coach teachers on the implementation and professional growth in IB practices within their respective programs of instruction.

To further support achievement of the mission and implementation of the IB program, the SICS education model will also include*:*

* **Pedagogical Staffing** - Each SICS classroom will have two teachers to reduce the student-teacher ratio and allow deeper differentiation in teaching and learning. One teacher will serve as **Lead Academic Teacher** the other serving as **Academic Intervention Teacher**. A fulltime **ESL**/Second Language Acquisition Specialist and a fulltime **Special Education Coordinator** will complete the essential teaching staff. Every teacher will be qualified in their area of teaching. SICS is committed to having the most engaging and prepared instructors in front of its students by providing support in skill development and leadership.
* **Extended Learning time and Calendar** - SICS' school day runs from 8am to 4:15pm Monday through Thursday and 8am to 3:05pm on Friday thereby providing more instruction in core classes per week than traditional public schools. Also, student learning is extended through 10 days of instruction added to the general calendar in a district where students are mandated for 180 days. A Summer Academy, an August Summer Sofari, and 3 School Break Inter-Sessions allow SICS to mitigate the back slide in both academics and behavior that takes place over long school breaks. The calendar design allows SICS to mitigate the effects of knowledge and skill loss by offering both readiness and enrichment classes during this time.

Each of SICS's key design elements above are directly correlated to the NYS CCLS. Currently, no other charter or district school offers this combination of programming. Of the current 25 traditional and charter elementary schools in CSD 5, none offer SICS's combination of languages with inquiry-led applied learning methodology of teaching and learning. As a district with an overall performance rating of 3 out of 10[1], it is evident that students may benefit from an innovative learning approach.

g) Target Population and Community To Be Served - SICS intends to serve a population from CSD 5 that encompasses Community Boards 9, 10 and 11. SICS program is designed based on community feedback and the annual analysis of need by each Community Board[2]. The most recent data available indicates that this is a high needs population of low-income students performing below grade level where: 86% of 3rd graders in district 5 are FRLP; 11% are ELL; and 18% of students have disabilities[3]. Additionally, 70% of 3rd graders are below proficiency in literacy and 63% are below proficiency in math. General graduation rates hover around 55% with LEP and SWD rates around 22%[4]. Of this population there is a large community of Francophone ELL families confirmed by 2010 US Census data. Of the seven zip codes that are within CSD 5, the largest (10027) finds over 4000 families of varying countries that will benefit from a foreign language program[5]. These include households of French, Swiss, Senegalese, and Haitian heritage, to name a few. SICS will target the households of Francophone ELLs and those in which Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) reside. This includes ELL students with IEPs.

3) Enrollment and Retention of SWD, ELL and FRLP students – Currently SICS has 75+ specific intent to enroll signatures and growing for 2016. Enrollment will be conducted via lottery. Workshops and community events will be held across the district, and where parents meet, to ensure enrollment of students from CSD 5, including those with special educational needs, ELLs and/or

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[1] www.insideschools.org

[2] http://www.nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/manhattan.shtml

[3] NYS Report Card 2011-2012:NYC Demographic District 5

[4] http://data.nysed.gov/gradrate.php?instid=800000047161&year=2014&ethnicity%5B%5D=B&cohortgroup=0

[5] US Census Bureau; 2008-2012 American Community Survey

FRPL students. SICS will continue to nurture relationships with organizations that are supporting the school and develop new ones. These are inclusive of, Community-Based-Organizations, CEC5, Community Boards 9, 10 & 11 and the local Council on Special Education (CSE) . We will collaborate with supporters to recruit from their collective 4000+ member families. This includes Abyssinian Daycare, The Reading Team, The Senegalese Assoc. of NY and Harlem4Kids.

ENROLLMENT:

- **SWD** – In addition to working with local stakeholders, SICS will include target information at each of its workshops and events that promote the benefits of SICS' key designs, particularly applied learning and dedicated Academic Intervention Teachers in each classroom, for SWDs. Targeted recruitment with local educational partners, including the Reading Team & St. Aloyisus Education Clinic, which provide services to students with IEPs for enrichment, has begun.
- **ELL**'s –Our focus will include recruitment events with the many international/cultural organizations in the District. We will work with the Senegalese Association of NY to send recruitment information and material to their 2500+ members, give presentations and set up outreach tables. SICS will similarly partner with other organizations including Morija French Speaking Church and HANAC Community Services Center - Immigration Programs (Harlem Office) as well as advertise in foreign language publications. All recruitment & application materials will be printed in English, French, Spanish and other native languages when needed.
- **FRLP** - Serving a district population 84% economically disadvantaged, SICS will continue to employ grassroots recruitment to reach FRLP parents, using street team distributors throughout the immediate area. Flyers will be posted and hand-distributed at local public meeting designations such as libraries, parks, heavily populated subway and bus stations, and public-housing complexes. Presentations will be made at district Universal Pre-K centers.

RETENTION:

- **SWD -** Having an Academic Intervention Teacher (AIT) in each co-teaching classroom and for both English Literacy and French immersion, students with disabilities will have an inclusive support structure that allows them to take risks while learning. Each SWD will be supported by an AIT who specializes in their academic, social, emotional, and intellectual needs within the classroom environment at all times. AITs will differentiate lessons and find suitable modes to learning that are both traditional and innovative. The Special Education Coordinator will lead the AITs in monitoring the progress of all at-risk students including SWDs through our transitional inclusion program and closely monitor IEPs to ensure there are authentic annual progress goals set for each student. SICS will support students by ensuring that design elements are included addressing specific needs and interests of boys of color who are an overrepresented population in SWDs. SICS has a strong family engagement plan that includes initiatives such as a Family School Association that addresses family needs beyond student school needs.
- **ELL** - Incorporating the dominant native language of district families is instrumental in retaining students. All areas of community stakeholders have requested a dual language program to address the underserved ELL population. With a 50/50 content dual language model students have language and content reinforced in both languages. The IB framework further ensures content is consistent across all subjects areas. Outside of the classroom, language support is provided through direct ESL and FLE (aka French as a Second Language) teachers whose classes are at regularly scheduled periods. With a targeted Academic Intervention Teacher in every classroom, ELLs will have access to focused differentiated instruction.
- **FRLP -** All students will feel and be fully engaged in their learning through the SICS dual language applied inquiry approach of teaching and learning. Through the key design elements under the IB framework and supporting elements, students will experience success. This is accomplished via their ability to take ownership of their learning and explore & discover beyond

the walls of a classroom and teacher lead instruction. Students will be motivated through immersion in both their own and other enriching world cultures through an international infusion into the curriculum. All students will benefit from our well developed, multi tiered, Response To Intervention (RTI) program as well as ESL and second language acquisition.

- SICS' Community Outreach Organizer, whose main responsibility is to outreach and support community based initiatives, will work with families to ensure students' needs that may create barriers to academic access and progress are addressed, includes leveraging the services of SICS' supporters and other community organizations. Also, an atmosphere of success and college readiness will be supplemented with ample support interventions to include the support of an in-house Social Worker in year one and Guidance Counselor beginning year two.

4) Public Outreach and Community Support (a/b) - SICS continues to conduct extensive public outreach within all sectors of the community. This includes parents with and without school age children, CBO's, houses of worship, residents, and political representatives in and outside of the district. We have spoken extensively with individual families in CSD 5,4 & 3 and community education leaders. SICS distributed flyers at local libraries, public housing and the surrounding area. We held 3 town hall meetings and 4 community events where we received great support and encouragement. The SICS Team sponsored several community events over the past 20 months to meet the families where they are, continue engagement and further relationships. We spread to the wider community through *Harlem411* 90.3 FM and gaining print interviews. Team members regularly attend community events, parent gatherings and Community Board meetings to represent Sofara, presented at CEC 5 meetings during public speakers time, and visited District DOE offices to share SICS promotional material. All information contained in our printed materials can also be found on, www.Sofarainternational.org and we continue to update the community through our Facebook page, Twitter account, our personal mailing list and community based parent listserves.

Our outreach collected **four letters of support from our elected officials** and **21 letters of support from CBOs**, over 800 signatures of support through a paper community petition,135 electronic petition signatures and over 75 intent to enroll signatures for SICS' 2016 school year. The signatures represent families from all five boroughs. Of those, 450+ signatures were from families based in CSD 5, about 130 from Francophone / ELL families and 325+ from the surrounding districts of 7, 6, 4 and 3. The remainder of the signatures came from families throughout NYC. Community residents gave feedback both in person verbally and on comment cards and through SICS' on-line petition. Praise and constructive ideas, even from residents not usually inclined toward charter school development, were received as feedback to SICS' key design elements. This included feedback on wanting a dual language program, choice of languages, parent supports and the need for growth through middle school. Community representatives requested SICS not co-locate.

Due to the tremendous & eager parent and community support, the limited educational options for a program with the high IB educational standards and global focus as an academic and community solution, we strongly believe SICS will exceed its anticipated enrollment. Strong enthusiasm continues from community leaders, educators, and parents. We also know in CSD 5 that 4613 applications were received for the limited 1563 charter seats available in the 2013-14 school year, rising to 4637 applications for 1806 seats in 2014-15 . The applications number extremely high at Charter Schools with shared IB components. Based on these numerous cited references we strongly believe that, should the Board of Regents authorize our school, Sofara International Charter School will draw from strong community support to exceed its enrollment targets.

Signature

Kevin G. Wells, Esq.
Proposed Chairman

06/10/2015
Date

NAME OF APPLICANT GROUP MEMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS	CURRENT EMPLOYMENT
Rashard Dyess-Lane	[redacted]	Henry Schein Medical, Inc. – Melville, NY
Janeat Brown	[redacted]	NYC DOE
Carol Fineberg	[redacted]	Educational Consultant
Kevin G. Wells, Esq.	[redacted]	Self-employed
Holley Drakeford	[redacted]	Giscomb Realty
Erika Williams	[redacted]	PIERRE & TANA MATISSE FOUNDATION
Pascale Bernard	[redacted]	NYC Council, Office of the Speaker
Voyka Soto	[redacted]	Sofara International

Nadhege Ptah	[redacted] m	N/A
Carol Anelas	[redacted]	Arizona (Maricopa) Department of Emergency Management
Bailey Rollins	[redacted]	Bushwick Ascend Charter School

TABLE 1: APPLICANT GROUP INFORMATION Sofara In	
*Minimum of 5 members must be designated as Tr	
RELEVANT EXPERIENCE, SKILLS, AND ROLE ON APPLICANT GROUP (Key Words)	**PROPOSED ROLE (if any) (Trustee, Employee, Consultant, or No Continuing Role)**
Global senior business leader with cross-functional experience, project management, Finance, compliance, strategic sourcing,ystem implementations and information/data management.	Trustee - Finance
10 years experience managing innovative curriculum for general & special education students. Expertise in needs assessment. Experienced in IB PYP teaching & learning and curriculum development.	Trustee
Experienced School Board & Educational Administator, Innovative Programs Director, Curriculum Development, Specialist in Evaluation & Assessment	Trustee
An attorney with a rare combination of entrepreneurial, legal, managerial, operational and diversity/inclusion acumen. A business and sustainability strategist. CSR expert and SME	Trustee - Legal
Commercial real estate, finance, development, & facilities mgmt. Risk management, contract negotiations. Community Board 11 member. Administrative management of personnel and	Trustee - Facilities
Grantmaking and nonprofit management, Data analysis. Charter School Founding Board Member	Trustee
Deputy Commisioner for Social Justice, Deputy Director of Community Outreach, public policy/political/legislative analyst	Trustee
Charter school Board service, 17 years International Educator: General & Special education, curriculum and instruction mapping & development. New school program and accreditation development. Steering/ school turnaround **IB certification in Teaching & Learning**,	Executive Director

Teaching Artist Consultant / Drama Therapist – M.S. Psychology, Strong history of community activism. Charter Board service.	Community Outreach Organizer
Expertise in planning, facilities, budgeting & operations. Experience working with government & educational organizations	Director of Operationss
Educator with focus on at-risk populations and progressive educational models, Experience teaching with International Curriculum. Charter School mission Knowledgeable.	Teacher

ternational Charter School		
ustees		
PROPOSED POSITION ON THE BOARD (e.g., officer, trustee, or constituent representative)	LENGTH OF INITIAL TERM	VOTING MEMBER (YES OR NO)
Officer - Treasurer	5 years	YES
Officer - Secretary	2 years	
Officer - Vice Chair	3 years	YES
Officer - Chair	3 years	YES
Trustee	2 years	YES
Trustee	3 years	Yes
Trustee	5 years	Yes
N/A	N/A	No

N/A	N/A	No
N/A	N/A	No
N/A	N/A	No