



# CRACKING THE CODE ON STEM

A People Strategy  
for Nevada's Economy

## Develop Regional Efforts to Attract High-Quality Charter Management Organizations

### Problem

Throughout the United States, high-quality charter schools are providing compelling alternatives to the traditional offerings of public school districts. These independently run public schools receive greater flexibility on curriculum decisions, pedagogical approaches, school-day length, and other matters in exchange for a high level of accountability for student achievement in math, science, language arts, and other critical fields. In addition to providing new educational options for students and parents, charters have also been shown to improve the quality of nearby schools by introducing an element of competition into the P-12 public education system.

Some of the most successful charters are run by charter management organizations (CMOs), which replicate proven models and create networks of charter schools in a given region. However, CMOs have thus far been reluctant to locate in Nevada, due in part to the state charter school law's prohibition against the conversion of existing public schools to charter schools. In addition, however, Nevada's regions have proven largely ineffective at attracting CMOs to the state, thanks to a lack of coordinated outreach and a failure to marshal upfront funding at the regional level. As a result, CMOs remain unaware of regional demand for charters in Nevada and the availability of startup funding that can make Nevada regions compelling sites for expansion. Absent concerted efforts to make the case for CMO expansion, Nevada will continue to face difficulties in bringing CMOs into its regions.

### Recommendation

To encourage nationally recognized CMOs to establish high-quality public charter schools in the state, regional stakeholders should work together to market their region to CMOs. From developing a prospectus highlighting regional attributes that are conducive to charter school expansion to lining up private-sector and/or philanthropic funding options in advance of

outreach to CMOs, Nevada regions can improve their profile as potential sites for CMO replication.

## **Implementation Specifics**

In order to make a strong case to prospective CMOs, regions should begin by taking inventory of attributes likely to support CMO-led charter school growth. High parental demand for charter schools, a strong pool of teachers, effective talent pipeline programs such as Teach for America, private-sector and philanthropic support, a friendly charter school authorizer, and a good fit with CMO target demographics (typically low-income, high-need populations) all increase the likelihood that CMOs will be interested in a given area. After collecting this information, stakeholders should work together to craft marketing materials that convey the region's suitability for CMO expansion.

Meanwhile, given Nevada's low per-pupil spending levels, regions interested in attracting best-in-class CMOs will also need to demonstrate that additional multi-year private-sector and/or philanthropic funds are available to augment existing funds. Pre-packaging external funding for startup capital, facilities development, and other critical expenditures in advance of outreach to CMOs can help underscore the region's commitment to supporting charter school expansion. Potential funders would not need to provide funding up front; rather, funds could be pledged in advance with delivery contingent upon a CMO's decision to locate in the region.

## **Budget Implications**

The cost of developing a marketing plan and the amount of funding that would need to be pledged in advance would vary depending on the size of the region.

## **References**

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. "Landscape Analysis of High-Performing CMOs and Target Markets for Expansion."

## **For More Information**

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