Initial Proposal and Pitch

The Initial Proposal Narrative and Pitch Meeting are structured to efficiently gather essential information and support a quality review and decision-making process by Education One. Proposals that do not meet the specifications outlined below may be rejected at the discretion of Education One staff.

Please note that Education One utilizes an invitation-only application process; only those proposals that demonstrate strong alignment, readiness, and potential through the initial proposal phase will be invited to submit a full charter application.

Initial Proposal Narrative

The Initial Proposal Narrative is the applicant's opportunity to clearly communicate the core components of their proposed charter school. Founding teams should focus on providing concise, thoughtful, and well-organized responses to each question outlined in the narrative. This written submission forms the foundation of the proposal review process and should demonstrate the team's capacity, vision, alignment with community needs, and preparedness to launch a high-quality public charter school.

The narrative also directly informs the subsequent Pitch Meeting. New ideas introduced or significantly different claims made during the pitch that are not reflected in the narrative may be viewed as inconsistent or underdeveloped. Therefore, applicants should ensure that their written narrative is their first priority, providing a comprehensive and accurate representation of the school's design and development progress.

Initial Proposal Pitch Meeting

As part of the initial proposal process, founding teams will participate in a Pitch Meeting with members of the Education One team. Much like entrepreneurs presenting to potential investors, this session is designed to give applicants an opportunity to bring their proposal to life, demonstrating a compelling vision, a coherent school model, and a credible plan for successful launch and operation. During the session, Education One will listen, ask questions, and evaluate how clearly the team can articulate its readiness, align with authorizer priorities, and understand operational requirements.

Format and Structure: The meeting will be held virtually or in person and will last approximately 45–60 minutes. Founding teams will present highlights from their written initial proposal (due the morning of the pitch meeting) and respond to questions from Education One staff.

5 minutes	Introductions
20-30 minutes	Founding Team's Pitch
5 minutes	Questions and Clarifications from Education One
5 minutes	Questions and Clarifications from Founding Team
5 minutes	Next Steps

Focus Areas: The pitch should directly reflect the content outlined in the narrative. Key areas to address include:
- *Introduction, Vision, and Mission*: Introduce the founding team and articulate the school's mission, vision, and development progress.
- *School Model Overview*: Describe the core design elements of the school and how they align with authorizer and community priorities.
- *Community Engagement and Research*: Share how the model has been informed by meaningful community engagement.
- *Plan of Execution*: Present a high-level overview of the team's strategy to open and operate the school successfully.

Preparation: The narrative responses to each section of the initial proposal are due the day of the pitch meeting. Founding teams should ensure alignment between their written submission and their live pitch. Strong proposals will clearly and concisely demonstrate that the founding team has:
- The capacity to execute their vision
- A thoughtful and informed school model
- A realistic launch plan supported by research and community input

Evaluation

The Initial Proposal Narrative and Pitch Meeting will be jointly evaluated using the Initial Proposal Scoring Rubric. Proposals that earn a total score of 32 or higher (out of 36) will be invited to fill out a full application.

Notice of Disclosure

All materials submitted as part of the initial proposal are subject to the Indiana Access to Public Records Act (IC § 5-14-3) and may be disclosed to the public, including the media.

If an applicant believes that certain information falls under an exception to public disclosure, the applicant must obtain an advisory opinion from the Indiana Public Access Counselor *prior to submission.* If the opinion supports the applicant's position, any such information must be clearly marked confidential in the proposal. In addition, the proposal must include:
- A written statement identifying the specific exemption(s) under the Public Records Act that apply, and
- A copy of the written advisory opinion from the Public Access Counselor supporting the confidentiality claim.

By submitting an initial proposal, applicants acknowledge that if this process is not followed, all submitted materials will be considered subject to public disclosure unless Education One determines otherwise. Applicants, including their employees, representatives, and agents, further acknowledge that Education One, L.L.C., its Board members and staff, Trine University, the Indiana Department of Education, and any State officials or agents shall not be held liable for any disclosure made in accordance with the Public Records Act. All such parties expressly waive any claims related to such disclosures.

Initial Proposal Narrative Specifications
- Proposals must be typed, single-spaced, on 8.5" x 11" white paper, using a minimum 11-point font.
- Respond with "Not Applicable" if a specific question does not apply.

Submission Instructions

Submit one electronic copy of the complete proposal in PDF format to: emily@education1.org on the scheduled pitch day.

Note: Education One, L.L.C. developed this initial proposal format using resources from the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA). Additional information about NACSA and its resources is available at www.qualitycharters.org.

Initial Proposal Narrative

Introduction, Vision and Mission

Introduce founding team roles and highlight relevant experiences.

Anteria Gross - School Leader / Founder

Anteria draws on over 15 years of experience across elementary, middle, and high school education to understand what she calls "the life of a student." As a teacher, instructional coach, and Dean of Students, she observed how a students' joy in learning often fades over time, especially during the middle school years. Recognizing a decline in motivation and purpose. She saw this most deeply among Black and Brown male students, whose strengths and talents were often overshadowed by systemic barriers limiting their opportunities to thrive. Recognizing these challenges began earlier than high school, Anteria became committed to changing the narrative for her students and reimagining education through a model that blends joy, play, and learning. Aiming to re-engage students during their most critical developmental years.

Learning through play.

Anteria has successfully led numerous school wide initiatives across her work aimed at enhancing the learning environments, both academically and behaviorally. Her various roles have included coaching teachers, implementing restorative practices, and developing behavior management strategies that promote a positive school culture. Anteria's deep commitment to the community she serves is evident in her leadership efforts to build strong relationships with students, families, and local organizations. Her graduate work through Columbia University's School Leadership Program, combined with her expertise in curriculum and instruction, allows her to design and implement programs that address diverse learning needs, fostering an inclusive and supportive educational environment. With a proven track record of improving student outcomes through data-driven instruction, personalized learning plans, and professional development for teachers, her leadership has been instrumental in creating an atmosphere where students and staff will feel valued and motivated to succeed, making her a vital asset to Innova Academy.

Briefly outline the school model and development progress.

Innova Academy exists to change the narrative of education for students in grades 6 through 12. We will begin by serving middle school students in 6th grade and gradually grow to include all grade levels through high school, using a holistic model we call the INA Way.

At Innova Academy (INA), our holistic school model transcends traditional approaches to education, supporting an expanded definition of student success, equity, and innovation. INA reimagines education by integrating Game-Based Learning (GBL), the Rise and Thrive character development framework, and a Village community approach into a cohesive, student-centered experience. This comprehensive model fosters academic excellence, social-emotional well-being, and meaningful connections, equipping students to thrive in an ever-changing world.

We know middle school is a pivotal stage in a child's life. When curiosity is high, potential is vast, but engagement can sometimes fade. That's why we've chosen to build a school model that reimagines learning to meet students where they are. Far too often, African American males in special education are twice as

likely to be labeled emotionally disturbed, and they face much higher suspension and incarceration rates. We also know middle school is the time when students are most at risk of disengaging from school altogether.

That's the gap Innova Academy is here to address. By combining a high-interest, culturally responsive curriculum with restorative practices, we're creating an environment where students feel valued, supported, and challenged to succeed.

Clearly articulate the proposed charter school's mission and vision.

Vision: Innova Academy envisions a future where every individual is a lifelong learner, equipped with the skills and mindset to thrive in an ever-evolving world.

Mission: At Innova Academy, our mission is to create a vibrant learning environment that goes beyond traditional education. We are dedicated to creating meaningful learning experiences that extend beyond the classroom. By embracing the power of play, we empower our community to discover the joy in learning. Our commitment is to nurture creative minds, foster collaboration, and instill a love for knowledge. Through this mission, we aim to shape individuals who not only excel academically but are also equipped with the skills, values, and enthusiasm needed to contribute meaningfully to their community.

Rooted and driven by our core values of Integrity, Inclusion, and Innovation.

School Model Overview

Provide an overview of key design elements of the proposed charter school's model.

INA's holistic approach to education reflects our commitment to addressing the diverse needs of students. It integrates academic rigor, personal growth, and community collaboration to develop well-rounded individuals. Using community feedback and input, INA has identified three core design elements to bring our vision and mission to life. The model's foundation lies in our three key design elements:
Game-Based Learning (GBL): Encouraging intellectual curiosity and critical thinking.
Rise and Thrive: Supporting emotional intelligence and character development.
Village: Engaging families and communities in students' educational journeys.
Together, these elements address the academic, emotional, and social dimensions of education, ensuring all students are empowered to succeed regardless of their background.

Game-Based Learning (GBL)
INA's instructional model is centered on GBL, which transforms traditional learning into dynamic, mission-driven experiences. By immersing students in real-life scenarios, GBL promotes engagement, collaboration, and problem-solving. Missions integrate inquiry-based challenges aligned with Indiana Academic Standards, ensuring academic rigor while making learning interactive and accessible for all. Through GBL, students develop the following skills to prepare them to navigate both in and outside the classroom.
- Critical thinking
- Collaboration and teamwork

- Creativity
- Problem Solving skills

Rise and Thrive: Character Building
In addition to academic growth, INA prioritizes students' social-emotional and character development through our Rise and Thrive framework. This approach integrates restorative practices and social-emotional learning (SEL) strategies to foster emotional intelligence, enabling students to:
- Manage emotions effectively.
- Build and sustain healthy relationships.
- Resolve conflicts constructively.

Through Rise and Thrive, students cultivate resilience, empathy, and self-awareness, key traits for lifelong success. The framework also incorporates Nova Powers, equipping students with essential attributes to overcome challenges and contribute positively to their communities. At the end of each month, we celebrate these achievements with students, staff, and families during a school-wide assembly, recognizing both academic and character successes.

Village: Community Engagement
INA's Village approach underscores the importance of collaboration among students, families, educators, and community stakeholders. By creating an inclusive, supportive environment, the Village model ensures that each student's strengths are recognized and nurtured. This engagement extends beyond the school, fostering partnerships that enrich students' experiences and provide culturally relevant learning opportunities aligned with their aspirations and realities. The Village approach at INA not only fosters meaningful connections but also equips students with essential skills to thrive in a collaborative and inclusive community through:
- Relationship Building
- Cultural Competency
- Community Leadership

INA's holistic model directly addresses educational disparities by providing:
- Accessible, high-quality education for all students.
- Inclusive practices that embrace diverse learning styles and backgrounds.
- Resources to close achievement gaps through rigorous, standards-aligned assessments embedded in missions.

Our GBL framework exemplifies innovation by meeting key conditions for optimal brain function: engagement, challenge, feedback, and reflection. By transforming learning into an adventure, GBL not only enhances academic outcomes but also fosters creativity, resilience, and teamwork. The inclusion of Rise and Thrive ensures that students develop the character traits needed for leadership and lifelong success.

At INA, success is not solely defined by academic achievement but also by personal growth, social-emotional well-being, and meaningful contributions to the community. Our commitment to these principles is evident in our continuous improvement efforts and our dedication to equity and innovation.

INA's holistic model sets a new standard for middle school education by seamlessly integrating academic rigor, character development, and community engagement. Through GBL, Rise and Thrive, and the Village approach, INA empowers students to excel academically, grow personally, and contribute meaningfully to their communities. By addressing local educational inequities and preparing students with the skills needed for lifelong learning and leadership, INA redefines what it means to succeed in today's dynamic world

Explain how the model aligns with authorizer and community priorities.

Alignment with Authorizer Priorities

Education One's initial proposal process emphasizes readiness, quality design, alignment, and a credible execution plan. Innova Academy's model demonstrates alignment in the following ways:

1. Clear and Coherent School Design

INA presents a cohesive, research-informed model anchored in three integrated pillars: Game-Based Learning (GBL), Rise and Thrive, and the Village approach. These elements are not standalone initiatives but function together to create a rigorous, student-centered learning environment aligned with Indiana Academic Standards. This reflects a thoughtful and well-developed academic framework consistent with authorizer expectations for quality and coherence.

2. Academic Rigor and Standards Alignment

Through mission-based instruction grounded in Indiana Academic Standards, INA ensures academic accountability and measurable student growth. GBL is not enrichment layered onto weak instruction; it is standards-aligned, inquiry-driven, and assessment-embedded. This directly supports the authorizer's focus on high-quality public education and strong academic outcomes.

3. Equity and Student Outcomes

INA's model intentionally addresses disparities affecting African American males and students in special education. By embedding restorative practices, culturally responsive instruction, and social-emotional learning into the Rise and Thrive framework, the school advances equitable outcomes; an essential priority for public charter authorizers.

4. Operational Readiness and Capacity

The founding team has articulated clear roles across instruction, finance, governance, community engagement, and authorization. The phased board development plan, nonprofit status, authorization timeline, facilities strategy, and funding partnerships (including New Schools Venture Fund and 4th Section Solutions) demonstrate a realistic launch pathway that is consistent with Education One's emphasis on execution capacity.

5. Community-Driven Design

INA's model has been shaped through community meetings, stakeholder partnerships, and the formation of a Parent Engagement Committee. Upcoming GBL camps will further refine the model based on real student and family feedback, demonstrating iterative development and responsiveness.

Alignment with Community Priorities

Community conversations revealed consistent themes: a desire for a school rooted in the community, support for transportation, and an alternative to traditional middle school environments where students often disengage. INA responds directly to these needs:

1. A Community-Rooted School Option

The Village model ensures that families, local organizations, churches, and community leaders are not peripheral partners but active collaborators. INA is designed to be a pillar within Muncie—not a standalone institution.

2. A Middle School Model That Engages Students

Families expressed concern about disengagement during middle school years. GBL transforms learning into mission-driven, high-interest experiences that promote collaboration and real-world problem-solving—meeting students where they are developmentally and academically.

3. Social-Emotional and Character Development
Community members emphasized the need for stronger emotional and relational support for students. The Rise and Thrive framework integrates restorative practices, emotional intelligence development, and recognition of character growth, helping students build resilience and leadership capacity.

4. Access and Inclusion
INA's commitment to inclusive practices, culturally responsive instruction, and support for diverse learning styles ensures that students who have not thrived in traditional settings have a viable pathway to success.

5. Ongoing Community Voice
Through camps, surveys, engagement committees, and local presence at community events, INA is embedding feedback loops into its development process. The model is not static; it evolves in partnership with families.

Community Engagement and Research

Share how the founding team has engaged with the community so far (e.g., community events, meetings).

In alignment with our third key design element, our Village approach, the community is a vital part of our school model.

The school leader connected with many key community leaders within the community to have lunch and coffee. Recognizing the importance of those conversations prior to hosting any events within the community. Understanding the respect of coming to the community first and asking was a huge step in our community engagement plan. Hosting meetings with the various councils and chambers was important to ensure we had their support before entering the community.

Following, the founding team has engaged with the community through various community events. We hosted 2 very strategic local community events in the community early on. These two events were set up to gather community insight and feedback with very important stakeholders. The first event was in the Industry neighborhood where local community members joined the INA team and discussed the possibility of a future school option. The community shared their desires of what this could look like. This event was intentionally designed for individual members to come and share their input on what education meant to them, and what true community meant for them. We knew in Muncie, community was something earned and respected. This step was important in our work.

The second event was held in the Whitley community with more grass roots community members such as church leaders, local organizations, and active members of the community. This meeting was held to take the information from the first meeting to not only introduce the school model but also to discuss the role of the community and what partnerships and collaboration would truly look like. How could the community come together with Innova Academy and build a school for the community?

Gaining such great traction from both events, we recognized we needed to establish a committee within the community to continue having conversations and gathering input. We created a Parent engagement committee within the community, this group was established to help identify immediate families we could come alongside and build relationships with. This group ensures as we continue to work towards school launch we are keeping the needs and desires of the community at the core of our practices.

We are also working with a local community member to host a Spring Game based learning camp for students. Our purpose for this camp is to introduce the Game Based Learning experience through our

curriculum while also meeting the needs of the community and providing a camp for the youth. We will also use this opportunity to collect feedback from students and families on the specific parts of the curriculum and learning experience.

We also are planning to host a schools out camp this summer to continue to allow families to experience our game based learning model but also building relationships with our team and building the culture we aim to bring in the school building of INA.

Both of these camps will allow INA to authentically implement student and community voice as we continue to work towards school launch. Having their voice early on through the process allows our team to make the necessary shifts and adjustments.

Community is our third pillar and goes beyond just partnerships. As the leader I have been doing the work to ensure the community doesn't only see me when speaking to them about INA but also during the times when they need a community member to come alongside and support them. Participating in local events, supporting local business and finding ways to truly build up our community presence and establish relationships beyond the walls of our buildings. We have participated in events like the Martin Luther King community concert, History Bites at the Minnestrista Gardens where the local community shared the history of Muncie, even more specifically, the History of the Whitely community. We continue to partner with future community events in the upcoming months

Conversations with educators, families, and even students have confirmed the desire for a school option in the Muncie community. Students are becoming disengaged and middle school is tough. Families are looking for options that are still rooted in their community. Innova academy aims to be the pillar alongside the many other organizations who are working diligently to do the work in their community.

Highlight insights from the community that have shaped the school's model.

Families in Muncie are looking for an educational option rooted in their own community, one that keeps their children connected to their neighborhood while providing strong academics and meaningful support.

Many families shared they have tried every available option and are eager for something new, particularly for students who have not thrived in a traditional school setting. They are wanting a school that understands the realities they face, including transportation challenges, work schedules, and family responsibilities.

Muncie is a community rich in history, pride, and deep relationships. From the outside, it appeared to have the resources and support necessary for students to succeed. However, as we leaned in and engaged in authentic conversations with families, community leaders, and partners, we heard a different story. While high-quality schools may exist in the broader region, the question is not whether those options exist but rather whether families in Muncie can realistically access them without leaving their own community. Too often, the answer is no.

That feedback has directly shaped our design model. Families told us they want a learning environment that re-engages students during early adolescence. They want strong relationships, clear structure, and individualized support. They want rigorous academics, but not at the expense of belonging and connection. Most importantly, they want a school that is embedded in the community, not separate from it.

Middle school is a pivotal and often challenging season of life, regardless of zip code. In Muncie, families and community partners are excited by the opportunity to build something intentionally different. An environment designed around the needs they have shared. INA is bringing quality where it is needed most: into the community itself. Our approach is not based on assumptions from the outside, but on the voices of

those within. Their input is guiding how we structure the school day, how we prioritize relationships, how we support families, and how we ensure students can thrive academically while remaining connected to the place they call home.

Plan of Execution

Outline a high-level plan for launching the school, including aspirations for board development, hiring, continued community engagement, and facilities acquisition.

Innova Academy is designed as a middle and high school serving grades 6 through 12. The school will launch in Fall 2027 with an inaugural sixth-grade cohort of 80 students and will add one grade level each year. Each year, an additional 80 sixth-grade students will enroll while existing students matriculate to the next grade level. This phased growth model is grounded in community partnership and intentionally designed to support strong culture-building, operational stability, and academic quality. A central focus of the model is high student retention year over year, ensuring that students and families experience continuity, strong relationships, and long-term academic support through graduation.

This planning phase has been led by a design team with clearly defined core competencies aligned to successful school launch and long-term sustainability:

- ***Anteria Gross**, Founder and School Leader, provides leadership across academics, community engagement, and overall school vision, ensuring coherence between instructional design and community-centered implementation.*

- ***Dr. Tenika Holden-Flynn** brings expertise in instruction, organizational leadership, and finance, ensuring academic rigor is supported by sound operational and financial systems.*

- ***Yesica Rufino** leads school startup strategy, charter authorization, and school governance development, ensuring regulatory alignment and strong board oversight.*

- ***Wilisha Scaife** serves as a community representative, guiding authentic engagement, family voice integration, and community partnership development.*

Planning Phase Accomplishments (2023–2026)

Since 2023 when our Board was founded, Innova Academy has operated in a deliberate planning and development phase to build the governance, financial, instructional, and community foundations necessary for a strong Fall 2027 launch as a 6–12 school, beginning with 6th grade.

Board Development and Governance Readiness
- *Established a formal governing board with defined officer roles and domain ownership across academics, governance, finance, operations, and community engagement*
- *Conducted regular quarterly board meetings to practice formal governance structures*
- *Initiated transition from advisory to full governing board in preparation for authorization*
- *Clarified committee priorities including finance, facilities, governance compliance, and academic oversight*
- *Began recruitment of additional board members with strong Muncie context to strengthen long-term sustainability*

- *Engaged in ongoing governance and leadership training to build capacity for effective oversight and regulatory compliance*
- *Designated board-level leadership for facilities planning and financial stewardship*

Hiring Strategy and Instructional Capacity
- *Developed an enrollment-aligned staffing model that scales responsibly with projected growth*
- *Established Year 1 staffing plan aligned to 80 students with a 20:1 student-to-teacher ratio and special education support*
- *Defined staff profile aligned to the school's instructional model and core values of innovation, inclusion, and integrity*
- *Designed a pre-opening professional development plan to ensure readiness for Game-Based Learning implementation*
- *Established instructional coaching and performance management structures to support academic excellence*
- *Developed curriculum planning systems aligned to Indiana Academic Standards*

Continued Community Engagement and Research
- *Hosted structured community engagement meetings in the Industry and Whitely neighborhoods*
- *Engaged local leaders, church partners, and grassroots organizations to inform model refinement*
- *Established a Parent Engagement Committee to ensure ongoing family voice in school development*
- *Participated in community events to build authentic relationships and visibility*
- *Designed Spring and Summer Game-Based Learning camps to pilot programming and gather student and family feedback*
- *Developed Community Game Nights to support enrollment strategy and continuous improvement*
- *Incorporated community insights regarding transportation, structure, and individualized support into model design*

Facilities Planning and Acquisition
- *Identified board-level leadership responsible for facilities oversight*
- *Initiated formation of a facilities-focused committee to guide site selection and compliance*
- *Defined space requirements aligned to phased grade expansion and enrollment projections*
- *Integrated facilities planning into long-term financial modeling*
- *Engaged operational and financial partners to support sustainable facilities acquisition*
- *Developed contingency planning structures to protect launch timeline and ensure operational continuity*
- *Identified one viable facility with deep community roots*

Financial Planning and Operational Execution
- *Established an enrollment-driven financial model with clearly identified cost drivers*
- *Built a five-year growth projection aligned to phased expansion*
- *Secured New Schools funding and a fellowship for our Founder and School Leader*
- *Engaged 4th Sector Solutions to strengthen financial and operational readiness*
- *Initiated compliance planning for charter authorization and regulatory alignment*
- *Structured refinement plan for post-authorization operational execution*

The following pre-opening milestones represent the final phase of execution required to ensure full operational readiness and high-quality implementation at launch.

Authorization and Regulatory Readiness
- *Secure charter authorization approval*
- *Finalize all state and regulatory compliance requirements*

- *Implement student information and data systems aligned to Indiana reporting standards*
- *Complete comprehensive policy and procedure manuals, including enrollment, discipline, and special education frameworks*

Governance Capacity and Board Development

- *Complete transition to a fully functioning governing board with formally adopted committee structures*
- *Recruit and onboard additional board members to strengthen local Muncie representation and long-term sustainability*
- *Finalize board training in academic oversight, financial stewardship, regulatory compliance, and charter accountability*
- *Establish formal performance monitoring systems to ensure clear oversight of academic, financial, and organizational outcomes prior to Year 1*

Facilities Planning and Operational Readiness

- *Identify and secure a facility aligned to Year 1 enrollment and long-term phased expansion*
- *Finalize lease or purchase agreements with financial sustainability in mind*
- *Complete all required renovations to ensure safety, accessibility, and compliance*
- *Obtain occupancy permits and required inspections prior to opening*
- *Equip classrooms and shared spaces with instructional technology and mission-aligned learning resources*

Enrollment Execution and Family Partnership

- *Execute enrollment strategy to meet the Year 1 target of 80 sixth-grade students*
- *Continue Spring and Summer camps to refine programming and strengthen enrollment pipeline*
- *Host structured family onboarding sessions and orientation events*
- *Finalize transportation coordination and family communication systems*
- *Establish clear retention strategies centered on relationship-building, advisory structures, and proactive family engagement*

Financial Sustainability and Fundraising

- *Secure pre-opening start-up capital aligned to launch timeline*
- *Finalize multi-year financial projections aligned to phased enrollment growth*
- *Confirm long-term sustainability assumptions based on enrollment stability and high retention*

Talent Acquisition and Instructional Readiness

- *Recruit and hire founding instructional and operational staff aligned to the school's mission and instructional model*
- *Conduct intensive pre-opening professional development focused on Game-Based Learning, Rise and Thrive implementation, restorative practices, and standards-aligned assessment systems*
- *Finalize employee handbook, evaluation frameworks, and performance management systems*
- *Implement structured onboarding processes that reinforce expectations, culture, and instructional coherence*

Academic and Organizational Systems

- *Finalize Year 1 curriculum scope and sequence aligned to Indiana Academic Standards*
- *Establish assessment calendar and structured data review cycles to monitor student progress*
- *Fully operationalize multi-tiered systems of support embedded within the Rise and Thrive framework*
- *Finalize financial systems including payroll, accounting, internal controls, and vendor contracts*
- *Secure required insurance coverage and operational service agreements.*

Address any partnerships or resources that will support implementation.

Innova Academy's implementation is strengthened by a network of strategic partnerships that provide both the financial foundation and the operational expertise necessary for a successful launch.

*Our primary funding partner, **NewSchools Venture Fund**, is our lead investor and is providing startup funding for Years 00-5. This support extends far beyond financial backing. Their investment enables key capacity hires and funds comprehensive leadership development, board training, school site visits, executive coaching, cohort-based learning, and other critical startup resources. Through this partnership, our leadership team and board are receiving the preparation and guidance necessary to ensure a strong and sustainable school launch.*

*Operationally and financially, we have partnered with **4th Sector Solutions**, a firm specializing in charter school finance and startup operations. For the past two years, they have worked alongside our leadership team and board to establish strong financial systems, ensure fiscal readiness, and build sound operational structures. Their expertise provides the technical foundation required to move from vision to execution with clarity and compliance.*

*To support the implementation of our instructional model, we have formed a peer partnership with **Kindle Education**, a middle school in New Jersey that implements a game-based learning model similar to ours. Their experience with a slow-growth model mirrors our own approach, allowing us to learn from leaders who have navigated a comparable launch process. Through this collaboration, we are working closely with their leadership team and lead teachers on staff development, model implementation, and day-to-day school operations. As we hire our teachers, they will be paired with experienced mentor educators to provide ongoing coaching and support during our initial years.*

*We are also participating in the **Indiana Department of Education's Innovation CSP Technical Assistance** coaching cohort. This initiative pairs school leaders with domain-specific organizations to receive professional coaching and technical assistance in targeted areas essential to successful school launch. The cohort also fosters communities of practice and provides shared resources to strengthen leadership capacity across participating schools.*

*Our community partnerships further ground our implementation in local trust and engagement. **Union Missionary Baptist Church** has come alongside our initiative by supporting our work and opening its space for community events. The **Whitely Institute on CETP** is partnering with us to ensure our school design authentically reflects and represents the Whitely community. We collaborate consistently with their leadership as we move toward launch. Additionally, **Motivate Our Minds**, a historically and longstanding youth-centered organization in the community, will host our spring and summer camps this year. Originally established as a space for after-school academic support and enrichment, this partnership represents the beginning of a long-term collaboration centered on serving Muncie's youth.*

Together, these partnerships provide the deep support and level of investment Innova needs for not just a successful launch but for a deeply rooted community connection to build and sustain.