

## Summation and Recommendation: HomeSTEAD Charter School

The HomeSTEAD Charter School application presents a comprehensive proposal for a K–8 charter program focused on Science, Technology, Environment, Agriculture, and Design (STEAD) through a project-based and place-based educational model. The program emphasizes hands-on learning, sustainability, homesteading skills, multi-grade instruction, and strong community involvement within the Two Rivers area of the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District. The application outlines a student-centered instructional approach aligned to Alaska standards using established curricular resources including Wit & Wisdom, UFLI Foundations, and Dimensions Math. The proposal also includes governance through an Academic Policy Committee (APC), a year-round instructional calendar, and partnerships with community organizations to support experiential learning.

The application demonstrates substantial effort in addressing the requirements of AS 14.03.250–.290 and 4 AAC 33.110. The proposed educational model is distinct from existing district offerings and reflects a clearly articulated mission centered on rural sustainability, environmental stewardship, and integrated academic programming. Governance structures, curriculum alignment, APC processes, staffing plans, and community engagement mechanisms are generally well developed within the application materials.

Based on review of the submitted materials, the program **is conditionally recommended** for approval subject to correction and clarification of the following issues:

1. Fiscal and Budget Corrections

School Finance reviewed the budget presented in Appendix I and identified several concerns requiring correction prior to final approval:

- The proposed budget does not currently balance. The additional \$3,000 compensation identified for the lead teacher does not appear to be reflected in salary and benefit calculations, while a separate \$3,000 allocation is listed for building minor maintenance/emergency funding.
- Revenue sources are not sufficiently identified. The application lists a lump sum revenue figure of \$1,298,310 without itemization, preventing verification of funding assumptions and accuracy.

- Estimated Basic Need and Quality Schools funding for 100 ADM appears closer to approximately \$1,258,540, though the proposal may also assume approximately \$36,000 in additional local contributions.
- If transportation funding is allocated in lieu of adopted district policy, the estimated amount would be approximately \$99,200 based on \$992 x 100 ADM.
- The application anticipates a lease arrangement with BEST; however, no placeholder revenue or expenditure information was included to support associated fiscal planning.
- The stated 4% district indirect cost does not appear accurately reflected in expenditures. Four percent of \$1,298,310 equals approximately \$51,932 rather than the identified \$45,580.

## 2. Facility Lease Language Clarification

Additional clarification is recommended regarding the facility lease language referenced on PDF page 49. The current language appears potentially tied to funding availability rather than solely to operational facility costs. While the application indicates lease terms would be negotiated, the final agreement must comply with AS 14.03.255(d), which provides that:

“If the school district requires lease payments by a charter school, the school district shall negotiate a lease agreement with the charter school for an amount that does not exceed the true operational costs calculated on a square foot basis for space leased under this subsection.”

Clarification should be provided demonstrating that the proposed lease structure complies with statutory limitations governing operational cost recovery.

## 3. Transportation Clarification

The transportation section does not provide sufficient information to determine compliance with adopted district transportation policies. Specifically, the statement that transportation “cannot be provided at this time” and that students “should space be available... be allowed to ride the school bus” lacks supporting detail and does not appear to reference or include the required district transportation policy documentation identified in Appendix J. Clarification and documentation are recommended to ensure compliance with district transportation requirements and equitable access considerations.

## 4. Calendar and Instructional Day Compliance

Review of the proposed instructional calendar appears to indicate approximately

166 student instructional days. Clarification is recommended regarding whether the proposed calendar satisfies minimum state instructional day and hour requirements applicable to charter schools and district-operated schools. Documentation demonstrating compliance with applicable calendar and instructional time requirements should be provided prior to final approval.

Subject to resolution of the concerns identified above, the application demonstrates sufficient organizational development, educational planning, and statutory alignment to support a conditional recommendation for approval.