The above projections are based on our current rate of growth that we have experienced during the last 3.5 years in our private school model here in the Canyon.
LETTER OF INTENT - NARRATIVE

1. The names and qualifications of individuals who form the steering committee in charge of developing the charter school.

**Courtney Liu**
Courtney started Sojournings Academy as a licensed family childcare home in 2020, which added a private K-5 Forest School option in 2023. Courtney was herself homeschooled K-12, and is a mom of 4 kids in Coal Creek Canyon. Courtney is a creative mastermind who has traveled the world experiencing other cultures and languages, teaching English in schools and designing custom learning programs for kids in China and Pakistan. She believes that children are innately gifted geniuses with the potential to transform society, as kids! Courtney also has experience with fundraising, capital raising, and grant writing. She holds a MS in Chinese Linguistics from Qinghai Nationalities University in China, and a BA in Business Administration from the University of Kansas.

**Lauren Fraser**
Lauren is the founder and principal of The Daniel Academy, a private PreK-12th grade school in Kansas City, allowing families an alternate choice in education. She Co-Founded a non-profit, Influential, to help train and equip people in their professions and callings, hosting conferences and workshops, and providing mentoring and other resources. Currently Lauren oversees the initiative, InheritanceKC, designed to help the urban core. She is also currently obtaining a Masters of Public Administration from Cornell University.

**Justin Liu**
Justin is the founder and managing director of Boulder Capital, focusing on Energy and Real Estate investments. He has experience as a Financial Analyst and Banking Officer, having held positions at both FirstBank and Bank of America. Justin is an entrepreneur who understands financial modeling, business planning and consulting, and is proficient at leading a company with clear vision, goals, and strategies; restoring profitability from negative returns. He also served as a research assistant to Dr. David Ikenberry at CU Boulder, Leeds School of Business. He has been a volunteer Business Strategist and Assistant Teacher at Sojournings Academy since 2020. Justin holds a MS in Finance from The University of Colorado Boulder, an MBA in Finance from Azusa Pacific University, and a BA in Telecommunication Engineering from Linyi University in China. Justin is fluent in Mandarin Chinese and grew up in China, but is now a local to Coal Creek Canyon (and husband to Courtney!).

**Heather Ward**
Heather has unique ties to the CCC K-8 school and community. Her mother taught at the school, she herself attended as a child, and she now has the privilege of teaching the children of those who were in her mother’s class! Given that Heather has served as program director for three years, is a member of the CCC Alumni Association, and has a reputable teaching career of 11 years at two different JEFFCO charter schools, combined with her
experience in county-led public schools for 14 years, she provides a solid background to be on the steering committee of a school for this community.

**Sean Walkinshaw**
Sean Walkinshaw is an 18+ year professional in software product development for the endurance marathon market & online gaming with Chess.com and is also 4+ year resident of Coal Creek Canyon. Mr. Walkinshaw has also been actively serving as the Vice President of The Coal Creek Canyon Improvement Association (CCCIA) since 2020 in areas of sales, marketing & operations; and, he’s a part of the Jefferson County land stewardship program as well. As a father and Christian man, Sean Walkinshaw leads with a servant’s heart and is keenly interested in retaining educational excellence in the development of young minds within Coal Creek Canyon. Sean holds a BA in Marketing from Texas A&M University. He also has a child enrolled in daycare at Sojournings Academy.

**Mindy McCormick**
Mindy is an experienced early childhood educator, administrator, community volunteer, turned homeschooling mother of two young children in Coal Creek Canyon. Her 10+ years of experience in the public and private school system bring valuable perspective regarding curriculum choices, implementation, and learning organization. Mindy’s professional experience comes from years in private early childhood programs from teaching young learners to becoming the assistant director of a program with 120+ children and 20+ staff members. Mindy holds her Colorado State Directors License and has completed all ECE courses to be recognized as group leader qualified in the state. Mindy’s dedication to providing an energetic and positive learning environment for Coal Creek Canyon children stems from her own experience growing up in the canyon. Mindy has had the unique experience of both being raised in the mountains and a graduating student from Coal Creek Elementary during the 90’s. Mindy advocates that the future of Coal Creek Canyon K-8 should be in the responsible and thoughtful hands of impassioned educators and administrators that will continue to build upon the valued legacy this special school has established throughout its long standing history.

**Henriette Hagg**
Henriette is originally from South Africa, but has lived in the Canyon for eight years, holding a long-term vision here for her family and community. She homeschools her six children, is familiar with homeschool charters, and has served as RN of Psychiatry and ED/Trauma for ten years. She also has ample volunteer experience. Her youngest child is a current UPK recipient at Sojournings Academy, and her oldest daughter actually interns part-time at Sojournings Academy as well.

**Katie Moore, PhD**
Katie is a scientist and local Coal Creek Canyon homeschool mom of four kids. Katie firmly believes that children thrive and learn most efficiently when immersed in nature with the freedom to move and set the pace of their own learning. Having homeschooled in Colorado for almost eight years, Katie is familiar with Colorado homeschool laws and the
many enrichment programs available. Katie holds a BA in Biology from Carleton College and a PhD in Cellular and Molecular Physiology from The Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. She currently has two children enrolled part time at Sojournings Academy.

**Georgia Michelle**
Georgia is a professional and award-winning performance artist, instructor and choreographer who is passionate about preserving the art of dance as an important part of history, culture, community, health and expression of the human experience. Georgia studied dance at Mira Costa College and completed a teacher training program at American Ballet Theater in NYC. She has also earned numerous certifications including ZUMBA, Barre Above w/ Pilates focus, Belly Dancer of the Universe, AFAA in group fitness, yoga, step, and dance fusion. Georgia is also a Certified Personal Trainer and nutrition specialist. Georgia served as the Dance Representative for the City of Encinitas Arts Commission, and for the California Alliance for Arts Education, providing art and dance programming for the people of North County CA. Georgia was appointed by City Council to become Co-Chairman on the board of the Boulder County Arts Commission, and also serves on the board at Dairy Center for the Arts.

**Jess Manual**
Jess is the Executive Director and Pastor at Pinewood Church in Boulder. Her skillsets include project management, strategic planning, community outreach, team building, content strategy, search engine optimization (SEO), and leadership development. She is a creative entrepreneur with eight years of experience starting, building, and sustaining three different businesses. Jess holds a BA in Religious Studies from Liberty University.

**Kelli Lee**
Kelli N. Lee graduated from Cornell University with a Bachelor of Science in Operations Research and Industrial Engineering. She has spent the better part of the last two decades working in real estate finance including five years of Investment Banking and Consulting in New York City followed by over 12 years of private equity in Denver and Mexico City. Kelli loves adventure, travel, and spending time with her family, especially her niece and nephews. She has held various leadership roles in children’s ministry, including most recently, leading the “Next Gen” (kids and youth) pillar at Pinewood Church. Kelli has visited more than 25 nations, and this year (2023), Kelli visited schools in Sierra Leone and helped lead a program for children living in a favela in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Kelli has experience designing and building processes in a variety of fields including: college recruiting strategy, women in real estate organization and children’s curriculum.

2. **Where the school will be located (either at the current Coal Creek Canyon school facility (11719 Ranch Elsie Rd, Golden, CO 80403) or at another location).**
Sojournings Academy Charter plans to operate out of the current Coal Creek Canyon school facility on Ranch Elsie Road.
3. **The proposed grade levels to be served in year 1 and at full buildout.**

   We love families and believe parents should have the option of sending their children all to one school! We therefore provide services for preschool through the twelfth grade, as well as additional childcare for younger siblings. We partner with parents to create customized learning plans for each child, with a schedule and environment conducive to their unique learning styles and needs. We also have innovative opportunities for homeschoolers. We have a mixed-age model currently and love the dynamic that it adds to our school. We do recognize that for the current enrollment of 78 students, CCC K-8 is over-staffed. In this model, letting five teachers go would allow for a ratio of about 9 kids to 1 teacher in order to potentially break-even (this is considering M&O, an average PPR, and teacher salaries, although we still have unanswered questions in regards to the currently budgeted expenses beyond that, the numbers provided by the district are still vague).

4. **The proposed opening date of the school (and amended: whether or not we can open for the 2024-2025 school year).**

   We are proposing a start date of 8/19/2024 in order to better serve the needs of the community in keeping the current 6-8 enrollment.

5. **A brief rationale for the proposal - why a charter school is being proposed.**

   We are currently operating a licensed in-home daycare/preschool, plus an additional private K-5 Forest School (with plans to grow to K-12). We love our students, have a high demand for our services, and have an expansive vision for our school and community. We would, however, like to access additional funding in order to make our services more affordable for families (this was our primary reason for considering a charter school model initially). We also recognize that there is a need for a neighborhood school.

   After a thorough analysis of the current enrollment and numbers, and based on our discussions with Jefferson Academy, Woodrow Wilson and Discovery Compass, and given the fact that Sojournings Academy is not currently a charter school, we believe that it would be unwise for us to move forward as a charter model (300-500K deficit has been the analysis of our discussions). We do however have some ideas for sustainability that could benefit the community (please see below).

6. **Please provide a brief description of why your charter organization has the capacity to provide quality education to the students of Coal Creek Canyon.**

   Currently we are serving 21 students per week right here in Coal Creek Canyon, only seven minutes from the Ranch Elsie facility. We have received outstanding reviews from the coaches at Colorado Shines, our model and curriculum are unique and sought after (we actually have families driving as far as Rollinsville, Nederland, Centennial and Gunbarrel), and our parents have been highly satisfied with what we offer, plus our students have a lot of fun!

   We are a “Forest School” rooted in classical values, providing our students with holistic growth, engaging learning experiences and life-changing ideas. We are also pioneering new ways to learn with our nature-based STEAM education initiatives. We partner with local
service agencies, take weekly field trips, and offer our students entrepreneurial leadership opportunities. We have also successfully integrated students with IEPs and special learning needs, as well as dual-language learners and students from multi-culture families, creating an environment of belonging that feels like family. Forest School (to us) means: self-discovery, teamwork, dirty toes, working math problems in the sand, reading up in a tree, engaging in thoughtful dialogue, everyday adventures and exploration, asking questions, moving mountains, joyful learning, helping each other, friendship and reflection; holistic learning that is as unique as each child.

We are also an “Apprenticeship School” where learning and real-life application coincide within working relationships. The examples we set matter. We build teams. We are servant leaders, truth speakers, advocates for the lonely and marginalized; we are filled with joy, hope, and purpose. We know our identity, we walk in our calling, we are loved and we love. We change the world. Our teachers and students live by the following leadership principles: Clear Vision and Direction, Empowerment, Communication, Adaptability, and Continuous Learning.

As local community members and fellow parents of Coal Creek Canyon, we also understand the benefits and challenges of this location and have a vested interest in its well being.

7. Please provide a brief description of how the school’s financial model will sustainably support the model given the projected PK-5 enrollment of approximately 50-60 students.

Our primary proposal is that Sojournings Academy will rent 5000 square feet of the building M-TH, 8-5, year round (with shared usage of the gym, restrooms, library, playground and outdoor areas, along with a science lab or even a shared resources/supplies agreement could work too). We would have full autonomy to operate as a private school under a building lease agreement. We believe that our presence there will provide school choice for the community, and work in tandem with a viable charter school, offsetting the high operation costs.

From our analysis, we expect 40 students in our program, or 130 students in a full-school model (for the 2024-2025 school year), with potentially higher numbers during the summer months (and school-off days).

We anticipate a higher enrollment as we will serve PK-12, in addition to younger siblings (in a daycare center model), and offer full-time services to homeschool families (or partner with a viable charter on this if the numbers work). We also could talk about a cyber charter model which would allow for more revenue without the coinciding increase in costs. Perhaps operating under the umbrella of an established charter (if our autonomy could be maintained) would also allow for creative funding, or in the event that we operated the entire space as a private school and allowed for a cyber charter in-person use of the space for a fee for those students desiring that. In order to determine the best model, we would need a more formal discussion of the building’s current financials and what resources are
available to us considering the various models proposed including full-on charter school, full-on private school, or private school sublease model in partnership with another viable charter. We believe in community collaboration and creative use of the space, and therefore agree that it would also be beneficial to all parties involved to hold a meeting after the district has read through the submitted letters of intent in order to determine whether working together through various means might be the most sustainable solution to a risky endeavor.

8. **Please provide any other applicable information you would like the review team to consider.**

   + Our school has experience with fundraising and grant writing (but believe utilizing these resources for a scholarship fund to offset private school tuition is more sustainable than relying on these as a primary funding source).
   + We have worked with the daycare licensing specialists from Colorado Shines and UPK.
   + We are interested in leasing/buying the building long-term.
   + We are interested in keeping school related items present in the building.
   + We are passionate about community engagement.
   + Members of the community have attended other schools and returned to us!
   + We have strong ties to the homeschool groups in the area.
   + We believe our unique model has the potential of attracting families from town, that a traditional school model would not be able to offer.
   + A cyber charter option would be interesting to explore and have more discussions about.

Thanks so much for your time and thought put into this process, I know it is not an easy one!