Public charter schools can have a variety of different management structures. Nearly two-thirds of them (65 percent) are freestanding and operate independently and apart from any management organization. The remaining 35 percent of charter schools belong to some type of management organization, but the structure and mission of these management organizations often vary significantly. Some management organizations are directly involved with the day-to-day operations of schools, while others provide only back-office support. The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (National Alliance) considers an organization to be a management organization if it manages at least three schools, serves a minimum of 300 students, and is a separate business entity from the schools it manages.

Overall, there are two different types of management organizations. Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) are management organizations with a nonprofit tax status. Widely recognized CMOs include KIPP, IDEA, and Harmony Public Schools, but there are many more. Education Management Organizations (EMOs) are management organizations with a for-profit tax status. Widely recognized EMOs include K12 Inc., Connections Academy, and National Heritage Academies. CMOs are generally thought of as being more involved in the day-to-day operations of the schools they manage, while EMOs are generally thought to provide back-office support. However, these generalizations ultimately do not define CMOs and EMOs, and it can often be difficult to discern the differences between CMOs and EMOs in regard to their level of interaction with their member schools. CMOs and EMOs differ from vendors that simply provide services to schools, as they have considerable influence over the instructional design and/or the general operations of their member schools.

### TABLE 1: TOTAL SCHOOLS AND ENROLLMENT, BY MANAGEMENT TYPE, 2016-17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MANAGEMENT TYPE</th>
<th>SCHOOLS</th>
<th>STUDENT ENROLLMENT</th>
<th>PERCENT OF SCHOOLS</th>
<th>PERCENT OF ENROLLMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CMO</td>
<td>1,607</td>
<td>733,555</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMO</td>
<td>869</td>
<td>550,015</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>4,518</td>
<td>1,724,536</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6,994</td>
<td>3,008,106</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Not all percentages will add to 100 due to rounding.

In 2016-17, the majority of charter schools (65 percent) were independent, freestanding organizations. Of the charter schools that were part of a management organization, nearly twice as many were associated with a CMO (23 percent) than with an EMO (12 percent).
In 2016-17, the ten largest EMOs, in terms of total enrollment, served 78 percent of all EMO students across the country. In comparison, the ten largest CMOs, in terms of total enrollment, served only 36 percent of all CMO students across the country. Thus, the vast majority of students who attend an EMO attend a school affiliated with one of the largest EMOs, while students enrolled in schools affiliated with a CMO are spread across a much larger number of management organizations.

**TABLE 2: TOP CMOS BY ENROLLMENT, 2016-17**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANK</th>
<th>CMO</th>
<th>ENROLLMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>KIPP Foundation</td>
<td>79,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Imagine Schools</td>
<td>33,745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Harmony Public Schools</td>
<td>32,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>IDEA Public Schools</td>
<td>29,335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Uncommon Schools</td>
<td>15,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Aspire Public Schools</td>
<td>15,867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Responsive Education Solutions</td>
<td>15,823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Uplift Education</td>
<td>15,336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>BASIS Charter Schools</td>
<td>14,690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Concept Schools</td>
<td>14,160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 3: TOP EMOS BY ENROLLMENT, 2016-17**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANK</th>
<th>EMO</th>
<th>ENROLLMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>K12 Inc.</td>
<td>93,561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Academica</td>
<td>75,586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Charter Schools USA</td>
<td>72,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Connections Academy</td>
<td>60,569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>National Heritage Academies</td>
<td>56,262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Leona Group, L.L.C.</td>
<td>17,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>EdisonLearning</td>
<td>14,680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Learn4Life Charter Concept Schools*</td>
<td>13,985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>CS Partners</td>
<td>12,457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>ACCEL Schools</td>
<td>10,971</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Formerly known as Desert Sands.

**TABLE 4: TOP CMOS BY NUMBER OF SCHOOLS, 2016-17**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANK</th>
<th>CMO</th>
<th>SCHOOLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>KIPP Foundation</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Responsive Education Solutions</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Imagine Schools</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>IDEA Public Schools</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Harmony Public Schools</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Aspire Public Schools</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Uplift Education</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Concept Schools</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Summit Academy Schools</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Success Academy Charter Schools</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 5: TOP EMOS BY NUMBER OF SCHOOLS, 2016-17**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANK</th>
<th>EMO</th>
<th>SCHOOLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Academica</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>National Heritage Academies</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Charter Schools USA</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>K12 Inc.</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Leona Group, L.L.C.</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Connections Academy</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>ACCEL Schools</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Charter School Associates, Inc.</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>EdisonLearning</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Victory Education Partners</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learn more at PublicCharters.org
The largest CMOs and EMOs often dominate the narrative surrounding management organizations; however, very few management organizations have portfolios that include more than 15 schools.

- In 2016-17, 62 percent of CMOs and 41 percent of EMOs managed a portfolio that included only three to five charter schools.

- In addition, 87 percent of CMOs and 78 percent of EMOs managed a portfolio that included 15 or fewer schools in 2016-17.

**TABLE 6: PORTFOLIO SIZE BY MANAGEMENT TYPE, 2016-17**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MANAGEMENT TYPE</th>
<th>3-5 SCHOOLS</th>
<th>6-15 SCHOOLS</th>
<th>16-25 SCHOOLS</th>
<th>26+ SCHOOLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CMO</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMO</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On average, CMOs serve populations with a greater proportion of students of color than EMOs and independent schools. EMOs and independent schools serve similar proportions of students of color.

**TABLE 7: STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS BY MANAGEMENT TYPE, 2015-16**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MANAGEMENT TYPE</th>
<th>WHITE</th>
<th>HISPANIC</th>
<th>BLACK</th>
<th>ASIAN</th>
<th>AMERICAN INDIAN</th>
<th>PACIFIC ISLANDER</th>
<th>OTHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CMO</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMO</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recently, some stakeholders and funders have signaled a commitment to back only the replication and expansion of successful charter school networks; however, the majority of new charter schools in 2016-17 (67 percent) were still independent schools. On average, new independent and EMO schools are somewhat smaller than new CMO schools.

**TABLE 8: NEW 2016-17 SCHOOLS BY MANAGEMENT TYPE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MANAGEMENT TYPE</th>
<th>SCHOOLS</th>
<th>PERCENT OF SCHOOLS</th>
<th>AVERAGE ENROLLMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CMO</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMO</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At the state level, there is tremendous variety in the prevalence of different management structures.

In 2016-17, of the states that had at least 20 operating charter schools, Texas was the only state where only 40 percent of charter schools were independently run. Texas is home to a number of large management organizations, including three former winners of the Broad Prize for Public Charter Schools (IDEA, KIPP, and YES Prep).

In more than 60 percent of states with operating charter schools in 2016-17 (26 of 42), at least 75 percent of charter schools were independently managed.

**Methodology**

Data for this report was collected through management organization and school websites. If a known management organization listed a portfolio on their website, that portfolio list was checked against the National Alliance's Directory & Enrollment Database to ensure that each school in the portfolio was accounted for.

For the schools whose management organization does not list its portfolio of schools, each school website was visited to determine if the school was in fact associated with a management organization. If a new management organization was identified, the database was updated to correctly account for all associated schools. A school with no association to a management organization was coded as independent. In addition, charter schools associated with management organizations that had fewer than three schools and/or fewer than 300 hundred total students in 2016-17 were also coded as independent.

The determination of whether a management organization is a CMO or an EMO is based on the organization’s tax status. If the organization is a registered nonprofit, it is coded as a CMO. If the organization is registered as any type of organization other than nonprofit, it is coded as an EMO. There are cases in which multiple business entities comprise a larger management organization. In these cases, the business entity that is determined to have the closest relationship with the schools is considered to be the primary management organization and is used for the purposes of coding the management type. For example, BASIS has multiple business entities. While BASIS.ed is a for-profit corporation, BASIS Charter Schools, Inc., is a registered nonprofit. BASIS Charter Schools, Inc., has a closer day-to-day relationship with the schools; therefore, BASIS is considered a CMO for the purpose of this analysis.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>SCHOOLS</th>
<th>CMO</th>
<th>EMO</th>
<th>INDEPENDENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AK</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AR</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AZ</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>1,258</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FL</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GU</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HI</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IL</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KS</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MI</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MO</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NH</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NJ</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NM</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NV</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NY</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OH</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TN</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TX</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UT</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WI</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WY</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6,994</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: There were 42 states with operating charter schools in 2016-17. In addition, Washington, D.C. and Guam also had operating charter schools in 2016-17. Not all percentages will add to 100 due to rounding.
### APPENDIX: MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS, 2016-17

#### TABLE 10: CHARTER MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS, 2016-17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CMO</th>
<th>ENROLLMENT</th>
<th>SCHOOLS</th>
<th>STATES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KIPP Foundation</td>
<td>79,040</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>AR, CA, CO, DC, FL, GA, IL, IN, LA, MA, MD, MI, MN, MO, NC, NJ, NY, OH, OK, PA, TN, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsive Education Solutions</td>
<td>15,823</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>AR, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagine Schools</td>
<td>33,745</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>AZ, CA, CO, DC, FL, MD, NV, OH, PA, SC, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDEA Public Schools</td>
<td>29,335</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmony Public Schools</td>
<td>32,084</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>DC, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspire Public Schools</td>
<td>15,867</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>CA, TN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uplift Education</td>
<td>15,336</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept Schools</td>
<td>14,160</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>IL, IN, MI, MN, MO, OH, WI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summit Academy Schools</td>
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TABLE 10: CHARTER MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS, 2016-17

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# TABLE 10: CHARTER MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS, 2016-17

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<td>James Irwin Charter Schools</td>
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<td>Great Oaks Foundation</td>
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<td>City Neighbors, Inc.</td>
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<td>Altus Institute Network of Charter Schools</td>
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<td>East Waco Innovative School Department, Inc.</td>
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<td>Rocky Mountain Prep</td>
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<td>The Harvest Network of Schools</td>
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<td>Preparatory Academies</td>
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<td>FL</td>
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### TABLE 10: CHARTER MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS, 2016-17

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<th>SCHOOLS</th>
<th>STATES</th>
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<td>Academy of Tucson, Inc.</td>
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<td>Two Dimensions Preparatory Academy, Inc.</td>
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<td>Global Education Collaborative</td>
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<td>North Texas Collegiate Academy</td>
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### TABLE 11: EDUCATION MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS, 2016-17

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<tr>
<th>EMO</th>
<th>ENROLLMENT</th>
<th>SCHOOLS</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Learn4Life Charter Concept Schools*</td>
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<td>SCHOOLS</td>
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*Formerly known as Desert Sands.*