

Audubon Center of the North Woods

ACNW New Charter Application Guide

- **Guide**
- **Application**
- **Rubric**
- **Checklist**
- **Reader Assessment**

2010 - 2011

Acknowledgements

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Statement of Public Domain

Audubon Center of the North Woods (ACNW) places this document in the public domain for the charter school community. The charter school community is free to adopt and utilize this document provided ACNW is acknowledged.

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Introduction

The “ACNW Charter Guide, Application, Checklist and Review Rubric” was developed to provide guidance in the writing and review of new charter school submissions. The target audience for this document is the founding group (the applicant) as they develop an application.

This standard application is divided into six application components. The components appear in this document in the same order that they appear in the Minnesota Statutes (124D.10 Subd 3, Paragraph (d)(3)).

(3) a description of the application and review process the authorizer will use to make decisions regarding the granting of charters, which will include at least the following:

- (i) how the statutory purposes defined in subdivision 1 are addressed;**
- (ii) the mission, goals, program model, and student performance expectations;**
- (iii) an evaluation plan for the school that includes criteria for evaluating educational, organizational, and fiscal plans;**
- (iv) the school's governance plan;**
- (v) the financial management plan; and**
- (vi) the administration and operations plan;**

Each component is divided into three sections:

- A Component Description,
- A Checklist for Completion, and
- An Evaluation Criterion.
- A Rubric

The Component Description is a narrative designed to give the applicant’s background information, reference to statute, and general explanation of the component. The Checklist for Completion should be used by both the applicant and the authorizer to monitor the completeness of the application. The Evaluation Criteria provides the authorizer with means of determining the quality of the application component, but may also be used by the applicant when targeting a high quality school program.

The format for the standard application is compartmentalized into the six application components and appropriate sub components. However, it is important to remember that each of the components relates to the others. The program model is not complete without consideration of goals and student performance expectations. Instruction and assessment are not complete without consideration of the mission and vision of the school. Staffing cannot be sufficiently addressed in isolation from budgetary decisions. The completed application should tell a story that integrates the application components into one comprehensive package. The vision and mission should be evident throughout the application and all program elements and resource allocations should be in alignment with the proposed budget and school program.

Charter School *Intent to Apply* Form

Audubon Center of the North Woods

Please submit this *Intent to Apply* form 30 to 180 days before filing your application. Add space as needed to fill out this Form, but do not exceed 3 pages (excluding resume attachments).

1. Name of proposed school: _____

2. Primary contact person: _____

Mailing address: _____
Street and/or PO Box

_____ City State Zip Code

Phone: (day) _____ (evening) _____

E-mail address: _____

3. Brief description of proposed school program and how it aligns with any of the statutory purposes of forming a charter school:

4. Grade levels to be served and target demographics:

5. What is the proposed location of the school?

6. Does the school expect to contract with a charter management organization or company for school management or operation? Yes No

If yes, identify the charter management organization:

7. Proposed Director, Principal or Lead Administrator Information (if already chosen):

Name of proposed Director candidate: _____

Current employment: _____

Phone: (day) _____ (evening) _____

E-mail address: _____

8. Name of applicant team or founding entity:

- A. Names, roles, and current employment of all persons on the applicant team:
- B. Does the applicant team or any members of the team currently operate or are employed in any other schools (e.g. charter, traditional public, or private)? Yes No. Describe.
- C. Explain the individual and collective qualifications of the applicant team members to establish a high-quality charter school, in particular, the capacity to assume responsibility for public funds, administration and governance.
- D. Include as attachments resumes for each individual on the applicant team.
- E. Explain the circumstances and motivations that brought the applicant team together to propose this charter school.
- F. Which applicant team members plan to become founding board members and or staff?

- 9.** Identify any organizations, agencies, consultants or institutions of higher education that are partners in planning and establishing this charter school, along with a brief description of their current and planned role and any resources they have contributed or plan to contribute to the school's development.

ACNW Charter School Application

General Instructions and Format

- **Deadline:**
 - June 1, 201__ (15 months prior to opening)
 - 3:00 PM
 - Applications received after this time will not be considered even if postmarked before the due date

- **Format:**
 - 8 ½” x 11” paper
 - 1” margins on all sides
 - 12-point font
 - Single Spaced
 - Page numbers and name of school in footer on each page

- **Page Limits:**
 - Number of pages is specified in each Component Section
 - Page Limits do not apply to required attachments.
 - Please limit attachments to those that are requested.

- **Evaluation Criteria:**
 - ACNW will only accept applications that score between 2 and 3 in every rubric area.
 - When feasible ACNW will discuss deficiencies in the application and allow the school to strengthen the application to become a 2+ in all rubric areas.
 - ACNW will only accept schools whose application and interview sessions indicate that the founders have the capacity to both open and operate a highly successful school.
 - The decision of ACNW Board of Directors is final.

- **Submission:**
 - The application should be electronically submitted by email in MS-Word and MS-Excel format on 8.5x11 pages to: s.dess@audubon-center.org;
 - The Document and all attachments should be electronically submitted by “Thumb Drive” in MS-Word, MS-Excel or PDF format to ACNW.
 - One original paper copy with all required signatures (in blue or black ink) including: Intent to Apply, New Charter School Application, and all requested/required attachments.
 - Three reproduction copies of: Intent to Apply, New Charter School Application, and all requested/required attachments.
 - Submit to:

Steve Dess, Charter School Coordinator
ACNW, Suite # 238
43 Main Street SE
Minneapolis, MN 55414

Executive Summary

Component Description

The executive summary serves as a concise explanation of the proposed charter school and identifies who is submitting the charter application. It should summarize the entire application including some of the material in the *Intent to Apply* form.

This section should be two pages long and should include:

- The proposed school's name, grade levels to be served, proposed opening date (month and year).
- Size of the school including a growth plan (if the school does not plan to initially open with all grade levels).
- A short description of the key programmatic features the school will implement in order to accomplish its vision and mission.
- How the proposed school will be more effective than the schools currently serving the targeted student population.
- Any other unique features, such as a non-traditional school year, longer school day, key partner organizations, multiple campuses, school culture, etc. and how (if at all) this school departs from traditional education in the proposed area.
- Student body to be served, such as key demographic data, targeted geographical area, etc.
- Evidence of a community need for a school of this nature.

Note: the Executive Summary is required but is not scored.

Executive Summary Evaluation Rubric

Reviewer Score	0 Failed to Provide	0 Inadequate	0 Adequate	0 Excellent
	Failed to Provide or was unclear and/or little evidence of understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	Most information provided and somewhat clear and/or minimal understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	All information provided and mostly clear and /or general understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	All information is very clearly presented and demonstrates exceptional understanding of criteria for starting and operating a high-quality charter school.
Strengths				
Concerns				
Additional Information or Conditions Needed				

(1) Statutory Purposes

Component Description

Under Minnesota law, charter schools must be designed to meet at least one of the purposes for which the law was created. Identify which of the following six purposes the charter school intends to meet and for each purpose identified, provide a paragraph or two describing how the school's educational program meets those purposes. The six purposes defined in law are:

- (1) improve pupil learning and student achievement;
- (2) increase learning opportunities for pupils;
- (3) encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
- (4) measure learning outcomes and create different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes;
- (5) establish new forms of accountability for schools; and
- (6) create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.

Checklist for A Completed Application

- Identify at least one of the six statutory purposes the charter school seeks to serve. ACNW prefers (but does not require) a school to select at least two statutory purposes.
- The narrative description fully describes how the charter school will fulfill these purpose(s).
- The narrative will demonstrate an exceptional understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school on the part of the founders.
- This section is not to exceed one half page for each statutory purpose selected.

Evaluation Criteria

Excellent Statutory Purposes will have the following characteristics:

Cite research and/or best practices that support the selected purposes for closing the achievement gap with students of similar demographics.

(1) Statutory Purposes Evaluation Rubric				
Reviewer Score	0 Failed to Provide	1 Inadequate	2 Adequate	3 Excellent
	Failed to Provide or was unclear and/or little evidence of understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	Most information provided and somewhat clear and/or minimal understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	All information provided and mostly clear and /or general understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	All information is very clearly presented and demonstrates exceptional understanding of criteria for starting and operating a high-quality charter school.
Strengths				
Concerns				
Additional Information or Conditions Needed				

(2A) Vision and Mission Statements

Component Description

A charter school application must have a mission statement for the proposed school. Many schools have both a vision and a mission statement. The vision statement is a statement of how the charter school will look once it is operating (the big picture view). The mission statement is how the school intends to make that vision a reality.

The vision and mission statements should be succinct, easy to understand, inspiring and memorable. Many schools post their vision/mission statement throughout their building and use it in their printed materials (e.g. Parent/Student Handbook and Employee Handbook). Resist the temptation to please everyone with these statements. Instead, define your school for potential students, parents and staff.

Checklist for A Completed Application

- The vision and mission statements describe the purpose for the charter school with a focus on impact rather than inputs.
- The vision and mission statements are the driving force and rationale behind all other components of the application. The school's goals, educational program, operations, etc., align with and support the fulfillment of the vision and mission statements.
- The vision and mission statements express the ideal, long-term impact, scope and scale of the school. The vision articulates what the school hopes to be. The mission statement explains how the school will attain the vision.
- This section should not exceed one page.

Evaluation Criteria

Excellent Vision and Mission Statements will have the following characteristics:

- Are clear, focused and compelling.
- Potential to produce high quality education outcomes.
- Express clear guiding purposes.
- Link to program features throughout the application.

(2A) Vision and Mission Statements Evaluation Rubric				
Reviewer Score	0 Failed to Provide	1 Inadequate	2 Adequate	3 Excellent
	Failed to Provide or was unclear and/or little evidence of understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	Most information provided and somewhat clear and/or minimal understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	All information provided and mostly clear and /or general understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	All information is very clearly presented and demonstrates exceptional understanding of criteria for starting and operating a high-quality charter school.
Strengths				
Concerns				
Additional Information or Conditions Needed				

(2B) Goals and Student Performance Expectations

Component Description

The application should reflect an understanding of the requirements of the law with a clear plan for how goals will be measured, how ongoing progress toward goals will be measured throughout the year, how data will be obtained and stored, and how that data will be used for program improvement and provided to the authorizer. It is understood that there are not actual baseline test scores, attendance rates or other data before the school is established. In addition to goals required by state law, a charter school may choose to have other measures for which they wish to be held accountable. Be sure to only include measures that the charter school is willing to be held accountable for over time, as these additional indicators become a part of the school's accountability plan. Sample Goal Statements are available in Appendix 3 of the *ACNW Charter School Manual 2010-2011*. ACNW will assist you with finalizing these goals in your School/Authorizer Contract.

Checklist for A Completed Application

- Specified student achievement goals for achieving the school's mission and meeting the Minnesota Academic Standards including mathematics, reading, and any other content areas applicable to the school's program focus.
- Specified student performance goals for achieving other accountability measures such as attendance, graduation, and appropriate aspects of school's proposed program.
- Specified goals for student growth over time in content areas, especially mathematics and reading, where appropriate.
- Goals are written using the "SMART" framework (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Reflective of the school's mission and Time-phased) which includes objectives and benchmarks.
- Explanation of how the school's assessment system will provide baseline data and appropriate ongoing data throughout the year to continuously monitor student achievement/performance toward SMART goals and make adjustments to teaching and learning.
- Outline how data will be obtained and stored.
- Outline how data will be provided to the authorizer.
- Reflects basic understanding of state achievement and reporting requirements.
- This section should not exceed two pages.

Evaluation Criteria

An excellent Goals and Student Performance Expectations description will have the following characteristics:

- Goals are clear, specific, measurable, attainable, results-based, reflective of the school’s mission, and time-bound.
- Goals are based on valid and reliable measures of student performance appropriate to content or accountability measure being measured.
- Goals measure school-wide status, student growth, and other accountability measures of student performance.
- Appropriate strategies are identified for measuring progress toward goals throughout the academic year.
- Clear, realistic strategies for improving student achievement and closing achievement gaps for all groups of students including the school’s educational philosophy.
- Data gathering, maintenance, and storage capacity appear to be adequate for school’s immediate and future decision-making needs as well as reporting to authorizer, students, parents, and other stakeholders. Evidence of research of Student Information Systems exists.

(2B) Goals and Student Performance Expectations Evaluation Rubric				
Reviewer Score	0 Failed to Provide	1 Inadequate	2 Adequate	3 Excellent
	Failed to Provide or was unclear and/or little evidence of understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	Most information provided and somewhat clear and/or minimal understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	All information provided and mostly clear and /or general understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	All information is very clearly presented and demonstrates exceptional understanding of criteria for starting and operating a high-quality charter school.
Strengths				
Concerns				
Additional Information or Conditions Needed				

(2C) Educational Program Model

Component Description

A charter school application must include a clear description of the school's educational program model (or philosophy) with rationale and the supporting research evidence for the selection of the program. This component section will define your school as high quality and provide evidence of your understanding of the criteria need to start a high quality charter school and that you have the capacity to close the achievement gap that exists in your future school, When certain characteristics of the school culture are critical to the overall educational program (i.e., small school size, character education and high expectations), the research and best practices must support the unique educational program design.

Schools seeking ACNW authorization should have curriculum design that is research-based, supported by best practices and aligned with the Minnesota State Standards. Schools should consider replicating highly successful charter schools with similar student demographics.

Instruction and assessment for all core content areas plus supplemental or elective areas should be described in this section. Evidence should be provided that indicate instruction and assessment will be aligned and incorporate critical components of the overall education program. Instruction should reflect the needs of the proposed student body as well as carry out the focus of the program model. The supporting assessment system should include diagnostic and formative tools as well as the summative assessments described in the previous section. Evidence also needs to be provided to assure that the school's curriculum will be aligned to the Minnesota Academic Standards and support the instructional strategies as well as the needs of the students.

In addition, the school is encouraged to provide special emphasis to each of the following as a characteristic of the educational program of their school:

- Provide a higher quality education than surrounding schools.
- Supports Smaller School Concept.
- Supports Family and Community Engagement.

Additionally, the school is strongly encouraged provide opportunities for children to instill a connection and commitment to the environment through experiential learning.

Checklist for A Completed Application

- Chart that shows student enrollment by grade for the first five years.
- As statement outlining student demographics including percent on free and reduced lunch, ELL percentage, Special Education percentage and anticipated ethnic group breakdown by percentage.
- Description of the educational program model with supporting research evidence showing how it will improve student achievement for the proposed student body.
- Description of other vital aspects of the program with supporting research evidence to demonstrate how they will increase student academic performance and meet the social/emotional needs of students in proposed student body.
- Description of relationship between education program model and aligned instruction/assessment system including how they are connected to the cited research evidence.

- Explanation of how the school’s assessment system will provide baseline data gathering, short- and long-term types of assessments, and how the school will use this information to revise professional development and instruction.
- Description of core learning areas, including the curriculum and how it will be aligned to the Minnesota Academic Standards and supplemental materials (if needed) will be developed during the first three years of operation
- Description of supplemental curricula for:
 - Special Education, electives or “special” courses is thoroughly described and based on Minnesota Academic Standards as available (e.g. modified standards).
 - Serving economically and educationally disadvantaged students.
 - Serving students with Limited English Proficiency.
 - Serving Gifted and Talented, High Achieving students.
- Description of the role of school leadership staff as instructional leaders including school principal/director and other teacher leaders.
- Description of the relationships and separation of duties between the Board of Directors and the School Leadership.
- Description of teaching skills and experiences needed by educational staff to efficiently and effectively carry out educational program model.
- Daily schedule and calendar for first year of operation are provided. The calendar and daily schedule meet the minimum number of hours required by state statute. Schools may want to consider a longer school day and school year. (Include an example of a proposed school annual calendar and daily schedule as an Attachment).
- This section should not exceed eight pages.

Evaluation Criteria

An excellent proposal will demonstrate the following qualities related to the Educational Program:

- The program model is clearly described and supported by appropriate research evidence for the proposed student body.
- Student enrollment projections by grade are included.
- Chart of student demographics is included.
- The program model reflects the mission and vision statement for the school
- The instruction and assessment are aligned from diagnosis of student achievement through the formative assessment process to the summative assessments used for accountability.
- The instruction and assessment system clearly support the planned program model.
- The proposed core curriculum is identified and a plan for alignment to the Minnesota Academic Standards is clearly described.
- The supplemental curricula is identified (or a plan to develop is described) and aligned to the Minnesota Academic Standards.
- School leadership team is clearly involved in the implementation of the school’s educational program model.
- The school day and school calendar are structured in ways that align with the educational program.
- The school has a plan for ongoing curriculum development and professional development that is data-driven.

(2C) Educational Program Model Evaluation Rubric

Reviewer Score	0 Failed to Provide	1 Inadequate	2 Adequate	3 Excellent
	Failed to Provide or was unclear and/or little evidence of understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	Most information provided and somewhat clear and/or minimal understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	All information provided and mostly clear and /or general understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	All information is very clearly presented and demonstrates exceptional understanding of criteria for starting and operating a high-quality charter school.
Strengths				
Concerns				
Additional Information or Conditions Needed				

(3) Evaluation Plan for the school that includes criteria for evaluating:

- **Educational Plans**
- **Organizational Plans**
- **Fiscal Plans**
- **and collectively the organization's capacity to develop such a plan**

Component Description

A charter school application should include a clear plan for evaluating the effectiveness and degree of implementation of the education program model, the organizational plan, and the financial plan. The application should reflect a comprehensive ongoing evaluation process using data to continually monitor and adjust instruction, curricula, school climate, school management, and fiscal spending.

Education Program Evaluation Plan

The evaluation of the education program model will include a discussion of the school's achievement of school academic achievement and overall school goals and student performance expectations in relationship to the degree of implementation of both the school's instruction/assessment system and identified curriculum scope and sequence. Student assessments should be aligned to the Minnesota Academic Standards and closely aligned with instruction, assessment, and curriculum models. The process should include both:

- Formative evaluation to adjust teaching and learning as well as job-embedded professional development and
- Summative evaluation to judge the value added by the school's unique education program model.

Organizational Plan Evaluation

The evaluation of the organizational plan will focus on the degree of implementation of:

- The governance plan,
- The management plan, and
- The operations plan.

These are outlined in later parts of this application. Since all of these plans should be coordinated to provide a cohesive functioning structure for the school, the coordination of these plans should also be addressed in the organizational evaluation.

Fiscal Plan Evaluation

The evaluation of the financial plan will include:

- A discussion of the yearly external financial audit and
- A description of the fiscal responsibility of the school in the management of public funds.

Emphasis of financial plan evaluation will be in compliance with spending and reporting requirements to MDE.

Checklist for A Completed Application

- Description of how the school plans to analyze comparison data of student achievement and performance expectations to identify areas of gaps or deficits including comparisons to:
 - The state of Minnesota,
 - The region in which school is located, and
 - Schools with similar demographics.
- Description of how the school plans to self-monitor student achievement and performance expectation trends to identify areas of gaps or deficits needing attention including school trends of accountability assessment data identified in both school and student achievement goals and the ongoing assessment data used to measure progress throughout the year.
- Description of how the school will gather and organize implementation data for the education program model including instruction/assessment system, curricula, and other identified critical aspects of model identified in section 2A, B and C of this application.
- Description of the school's procedures for taking corrective action in the event student achievement results fall below the academic and student goals approved by the authorizer in the charter contract.
- Description of how the school plans to gather and organize implementation data of each of its organization components: a) governance plan; b) management plan; and c) operation plan.
- School's proposed financial plan clearly describes the school's compliance with fiscal policies and procedures required by MDE and the authorizer.
- Explanation of how the data on implementation of the financial plan will be used to show compliance to state and authorizer requirements when reporting to stakeholders.
- Identification of the timeline and person responsible for initiation of each of the evaluation components.
- If the school plans to contract with an external service provider for evaluation services, describe evaluation components to be completed by external contractor; describe how contractor was selected, financial commitments for the evaluation, and level of external evaluator's flexibility in determining evaluation methods.
- This section should not exceed eight pages.

Evaluation Criteria

An excellent Educational, Organizational and Fiscal Performance Evaluation Plan will include the following characteristics:

- Evaluation of the education program model makes appropriate use of all available student achievement and performance expectation data
- Description of how the school will analyze relationship between student achievement/performance data and degree of implementation of education program data to identify areas of gaps or deficits in student achievement connected to Minnesota Academic Standards, especially in mathematics and reading.
- Evaluation of the school’s organization plan adequately measures the effectiveness and efficiency of the school’s governance process, administration plan, and operations plan and establishes a logical structure to use the results for continuous improvement of the organization.
- Explanation of how the financial audit data will be used to make adjustments in fiscal policies and procedures to improve the financial health of the school.
- Appropriate data is collected and organized in a format to easily facilitate evaluation process for all components.
- Planned evaluation is sufficiently frequent to effectively monitor and adjust behaviors or structures within the school.
- Clearly outlines roles and responsibilities for implementing the school’s comprehensive evaluation plan.

(3) Educational, Organizational and Fiscal Performance Evaluation Plan Evaluation Rubric				
Reviewer Score	0 Failed to Provide	1 Inadequate	2 Adequate	3 Excellent
	Failed to Provide or was unclear and/or little evidence of understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	Most information provided and somewhat clear and/or minimal understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	All information provided and mostly clear and /or general understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	All information is very clearly presented and demonstrates exceptional understanding of criteria for starting and operating a high-quality charter school.
Strengths				
Concerns				
Additional Information or Conditions Needed				

(4) Governance and Management Plan

Component Description

Charter school governance is extremely important to the success of a charter school. Oftentimes, a proposed charter school's applicant team transitions to become the school's founding governing board. The charter school application should describe:

- How the applicant team was formed,
- How it completed its tasks and
- The team's plans to transition the governance of the school to the governing board.

The following information relates to the school's Board of Directors:

- The number of directors on a charter school board may not be less than five and it is generally considered a best practice to have no more than nine directors.
- While some existing Minnesota charter schools have a teacher majority on the governing board, others do not.
- Under Minnesota law, the chief administrator and chief financial officer are ex-officio, non-voting board members.
- If staff members have voting privileges, there should be clear policies to explain when that board member should recuse him/herself.
- Any potential conflict of interest by any board member should be disclosed and addressed.

The charter school application should also describe the school's legal status. Schools authorized by ACNW are required to obtain a nonprofit corporation status and apply for tax-exempt status with the IRS. The charter school governing board must operate in compliance with the Minnesota Open Meetings Law and Minnesota Government Data Practices Act.

Every charter school governing board should have a set of board policies. Much of what is included in the charter school application will become board policy. For instance, the school's vision/mission statement, legal status, enrollment policy, discipline policy and nondiscrimination policy will all be in the board policy book. These board policies should be made available to school staff and families.

This section should also provide a description of pre-opening tasks with the assigned to the applicant team members to ensure a successful opening. Charter schools may elect to become part of a cooperative or contract with an education service provider.

Checklist for A Completed Application

- Description of:
 - The process involved in developing the applicant team
 - The individual expertise represented on the steering committee
 - The process to appoint or elect the initial governing board
 - How and when bylaws will be adopted by the board
 - The governance structure for the school
 - The nature and extent of parental and/or community involvement in governance
 - The amount of authority the governing board will convey to the school's administrator, along with a clear delineation of their respective roles and the means by which the administrator will be evaluated

- Explanation of the proposed transition between the applicant team and the school’s governing board, including:
 - Timeline for start-up tasks with applicant team’s duties to ensure a successful opening
 - Identification of individuals making the transition
 - How the transition plan will provide for a smooth shift of responsibilities
 - How the founder group’s original vision and mission will be brought to fruition.
- Description of how a lead administrator will be hired and the transition of leadership will happen.
- Explanation of how training for new board members as required by statute will be provided.
- Explanation of the proposed board meeting frequency and focus; the role of any standing committees is included.
- Explanation of compliance with Open Meetings and Open Records laws.
- Description of how the founding governing board will create and adopt board policies.
- Attach the following documents:
 - An Organizational Chart which depicts relationships of MDE, Authorizer, Families, Board of Directors, School Leadership and Licensed and Non-licensed Staff.
 - Actual or draft articles of incorporation and bylaws indicating legal status.
 - Resumes of applicant team members and/or founding board members.
 - Draft of initial board policies including Conflict of Interest and Grievance Process policies
- This section should not exceed six pages, excluding requested attachments.

Evaluation Criteria:

An excellent application will demonstrate the following characteristics related to the Governance and Management Plan:

- Explanation of meaningful parent and community involvement in the governance of the school.
- Clear distinction between the roles/responsibilities of board members and administration.
- Clear description of transition from the applicant team to a working board, providing a smooth shift of responsibilities and implementation of the founder group’s original vision and mission
- Sufficient resources and support for transition from applicant team to founding governing board and administrator structure prior to the school’s opening.
- Comprehensive description of start-up tasks to ensure a successful opening.
- Sufficient plan with timeline for ongoing board training and capacity building .
- Appropriate responsibility for legal compliance evident throughout governance plan.
- Proposed bylaws explain powers and duties, size, terms, composition, qualifications, term limits, officer positions and duties, election procedure, vacancy replacement, minimum number on the board, quorum and decision making process, how board members are elected or appointed, and when this takes place.
- Proposed board members will contribute a wide range of experience and expertise (such as education, management, finances, law, and community outreach) that will be needed to oversee a successful charter school.

- Conflict of Interest policy delineates potential conflicts and how they will be addressed.
- Grievance process is clear and follows an appropriate route for resolution of concerns raised by students or parents.

(4) Governance and Management Plan Evaluation Rubric				
Reviewer Score	0 Failed to Provide	1 Inadequate	2 Adequate	3 Excellent
	Failed to Provide or was unclear and/or little evidence of understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	Most information provided and somewhat clear and/or minimal understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	All information provided and mostly clear and /or general understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	All information is very clearly presented and demonstrates exceptional understanding of criteria for starting and operating a high-quality charter school.
Strengths				
Concerns				
Additional Information or Conditions Needed				

(5) Financial Management Plan

Component Description

The budget and financial plan for the charter school must include a plan for revenues and expenditures plus a plan for compliance with state and federal accounting and reporting requirements. The plan should demonstrate diligent financial practices, clear alignment to the other components in the application, and strong oversight. Particular attention should be given to facility and salary costs, as a large portion of the school's budget.

The proposed budget should be based on reasonable estimates that reflect choices made throughout the rest of the charter application. For example, enrollment projections used elsewhere in the application need to be the same enrollment projections used in the development of the budget.

The budget should demonstrate an ability to understand the sources of funding available to the charter school and the types of expenditures required to operate the charter school. When projecting revenue numbers, the single most important factor to understand is enrollment. Enrollment projections must be accurate, and it is best to project conservatively for budget purposes.

Describe other sources of revenue in funding specific programs or in helping with startup costs such as federal grants, compensatory aid, special education and more. When planning expenditures, it is important to understand how choices affect different areas of the budget.

Describe other costs such as staffing, special education, various professional services, classroom supplies and materials, general supplies and materials, technology, lease, liability insurance, and authorizer fees. Employees of charter schools are public employees and must participate in Minnesota's Public Employees' Retirement Association (PERA) or in the Teachers Retirement Association (TRA).

Checklist for A Completed Application

- Start-up plan for staff, planning, preparations and other costs with timelines including only grants or donations already received or for which commitments have been received.
- Description of financial policies and procedures including checks and balances of cash disbursement and ways to ensure alignment with the school's mission and vision.
- Description of a proposed state-approved financial management system.
- Identification of who will be responsible for school's financial management.
- Provides a Three-year budget(As an attachment) which includes:
 - Realistic assumptions for income and expenses and their basis;
 - A cash flow projection for 12 months of Start-up and the first 24-months of operation:
 - Using an acceptable budget model
 - Accounting for direct student instructional expenses, PERA/TRA contributions, and other benefits,
 - Accounting for state funding holdbacks
 - Shows separation of general fund and food service fund;
 - Establishment of an emergency/long-term reserve fund;
 - Minimum enrollment needed for solvency;
 - Adequate staffing aligned with the narrative in other application sections; and
 - List of any planned services to be contracted to outside providers.

- Description of the school’s process to contract with an Audit Firm to conduct an annual, independent financial audit including how results will be disseminated to MDE and the authorizer.
- Explanations of how the school will remain fiscally solvent, adhere to generally acceptable accounting practices, have no material breaches, and will address any concerns from the independent financial audit.
- Descriptions of the charter school’s plan to ensure that STARS, MARSS, UFARS, EDRS, IDEAS, CLICS, SERVS reports and data uploads are completed.
- This section should not exceed four pages (excluding attachments).

Evaluation Criteria

An excellent proposal will present a Financial Plan with the following characteristics:

- Adequate and reasonable plan to manage startup costs with available federal, state and/or private grant funds with adequate allocations and anticipated timelines.
- Adequate budget assumptions and financial planning based on realistic revenue and expenditure projections and/or quotes for the term of the proposed contract (at least three years).
- Budget balances each year with realistic cash flow for first year, has sufficient checks and balances, and does not include ‘contingent funds’ such as grant money or donations.
- Budget assumptions based on a minimum number of students needed for financial viability in addition to 100% of anticipated enrollment.
- Spending priorities align with the school’s mission, educational plan, plans for management and operations, and growth.
- Identification of costs associated with the anticipated facilities needs is realistic (based on anticipated location, size, lease aid expected, etc.) and inclusive of renovation, rent, utilities, insurance and maintenance.
- Clear description of how the school will conduct an annual audit of the financial and administrative operations of the school.

V				
Reviewer Score	0 Failed to Provide	1 Inadequate	2 Adequate	3 Excellent
	Failed to Provide or was unclear and/or little evidence of understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	Most information provided and somewhat clear and/or minimal understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	All information provided and mostly clear and /or general understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	All information is very clearly presented and demonstrates exceptional understanding of criteria for starting and operating a high-quality charter school.
Strengths				
Concerns				
Additional Information or Conditions Needed				

(6A) Administration Plan

Component Description

A charter school must provide an explanation of its proposed management structure. An organizational chart may be used to provide a visual picture of the management structure. The narrative should give a clear delineation of employee classifications and who is responsible for oversight of the educational program and of school operations at each level of the organization chart. It must describe the relationship that will exist between the charter school and its employees. Hiring, evaluation processes, and termination processes are part of the relationship. Proposed employment policies should be addressed.

If the proposed school intends to contract with an education service provider (ESP), such as a charter management organization, cooperative, education management organization, or any other type of school management provider, the applicants must describe how and why the ESP was selected and present evidence demonstrating a well thought-out plan to manage the relationship with the service provider for the benefit of the school.

Checklist for A Completed Application

- An organizational chart is included as an attachment; the chart shows the relationship between administrative, teaching and support staff positions. This was requested in Governance and Management [5] component of this application.
- A narrative description gives clear delineation of employee classification and who is responsible for oversight of the educational program and of school operations at each level of the organizational chart.
- A clear definition of where the responsibility for employee hiring, evaluation and termination resides.
- Job descriptions for administrator, teachers, and key employees are included.
- Clear standards are in place for determining staff qualifications to meet NCLB and all licensure requirements.
- Descriptions of key employee policies including employment practices, benefits, leave policies, grievance policy, conflict of interest policy, harassment, drug-free workplace, classroom practices, and evaluation practices are attached.
- A clear plan of support for staff development and funding is included.
- This section should not exceed three pages.

Checklist for A Completed Application if contracting with ESP

- An explanation of how and why the ESP was selected.
- Evidence that the service provider is authorized to do business in Minnesota.
- Detailed explanation of the ESP's success in serving student populations similar to the targeted student population, including demonstrated academic achievement as well as successful management of non-academic school functions (e.g., back-office services, school operations, extra-curricular programs) if these are to be covered in the contract.
- A draft of the proposed management contract setting forth the proposed duration of the management contract; roles and responsibilities; scope of services and resources to be provided by the ESP; performance evaluation measures and timelines; compensation

structure including identification of all fees to be paid to the ESP; methods of contract oversight and enforcement; investment disclosure; and conditions for renewal and termination of the contract.

- Explanation of the relationship between the school governing board and the ESP, specifying how the governing board will monitor and evaluate the performance of the service provider, the internal controls that will guide the relationship, and how the governing board will ensure fulfillment of performance expectations, or have a means for severing the contract.
- An explanation of which staff will be hired and terminated by the ESP or report to or be paid by the ESP.
- Evidence that the ESP is authorized to conduct business in Minnesota.
- Clear understanding of financial obligation to ESP if enrollment increases, decreases or stays the same for the duration of the relationship.
- Additional pages up to four can be added for this section if contracting with ESP.

Evaluation Criteria

An excellent application will address the following regarding the Administration Plan:

- Explanation of the relationship that will exist between the charter school and its employees, with employee classification clearly defined.
- Explanation of responsibility for overseeing the educational program aligned with the school mission and vision.
- Employment policies of the school are adequate OR there is a clear plan for timely development and intent of such policies.
- A manageable plan for job-embedded professional development, mentorship, retention and regular evaluation of staff is linked to the school's mission and educational program, including a timeline, lead contact, and specific actions.

Attachments required:

- Administrator's job description
- Teachers' job description
- Requested Employee Policies
- Organizational Chart (if not submitted in [5]).
- Required information if using an ESP.

In addition, if the school proposes to contract with an ESP, an excellent application will also address the following:

- Sufficient evidence to demonstrate the ESP has been successful in the academic and business operations aspects of other schools.
- Reasonable management contract terms and fees along with clear performance measures and contract severing provisions.
- Details sufficient to assure there are no potential conflicts of interest between the ESP and the governing board.
- A clear plan for monitoring and evaluating performance of the ESP and adequate internal controls are in place.

- A clear description provided for which staff members will be hired, evaluated and terminated by the ESP, and any relationship with the governing board on these decisions.

(6A) Administration Plan Evaluation Rubric				
Reviewer Score	0 Failed to Provide	1 Inadequate	2 Adequate	3 Excellent
	Failed to Provide or was unclear and/or little evidence of understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	Most information provided and somewhat clear and/or minimal understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	All information provided and mostly clear and /or general understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	All information is very clearly presented and demonstrates exceptional understanding of criteria for starting and operating a high-quality charter school.
Strengths				
Concerns				
Additional Information or Conditions Needed				

(6B) Operations Plan

Component Description

The Operation Plans section of the application includes a number of different parts including but not limited to:

- A business plan,
- A School Calendar and Schedule (See Component 2C) to structure the day-to-day functioning of the school,
- An outreach procedural plan to inform the community as a means of recruiting students,
- Student Discipline Policy,
- Parent Involvement Plan,
- Transportation Plan and Policies,
- Food Service Plan,
- Enrollment plan, including a lottery system if needed, and
- An analysis of the adequacy of the identified facility for the school.

The most important thing during the application process is to plan as much as possible and to clearly articulate those plans.

It is important for charter school developers to provide adequate notice to the community about the possibility of the new charter school. Some parts of the community may need additional outreach. For example, publications may need to be translated into other languages. A feasible recruitment plan is essential to attract a projected enrollment

The Charter Schools Law requires the charter school to admit by lottery if applications for enrollment exceed school capacity. The lottery policies and plan for enrollment should demonstrate how the school plans to enroll students. State and federal law requires a public charter school to not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services. It is important to distinguish between admission decisions and academic placement decisions. The Charter School Law prohibits discrimination based on academic ability. Diagnostic or placement exams may be given **after** students have been officially enrolled.

As public schools, charter schools must open their enrollment to any student and must provide free and appropriate education (FAPE) services as needed for students with disabilities. The charter school developer should consider the general philosophy of the school when developing delivery of special education services.

All charter schools must meet the standards for student discipline, expulsion and suspension. Charter schools should detail how the school proposes to handle student discipline, expulsion and suspension.

The application should demonstrate the expectations and plans for ongoing parent and community involvement and the support of volunteers.

A charter school may choose to provide transportation or have it provided by the resident school district. If a charter school chooses to provide transportation services, the application must briefly describe these services. The transportation services should include provisions for transporting students

to and from the charter school and their homes, and to and from the charter school and extracurricular activities.

For food services, the plan should include a description of how this service will be offered. The cost of these services must be included in the charter school's budget.

One of the greatest challenges to opening a new school is finding a suitable facility. It can be difficult to negotiate for facility space without having an approved charter. It is not necessary to have a signed formal agreement for a facility during the application process, but any viable options should be explained and should:

- Include reasonable space requirements,
- A feasible plan for space utilization,
- A discussion of how the facility will be ready for use when the school opens and, most importantly,
- Reasonable costs of that facility reflected in the proposed budget.

Charter schools may rent, lease, or otherwise finance facility space (they may own buildings but at present are not allowed to use public funds for purchase). In some cases, a school district may have an unused facility; in other cases, a charter school may share space with another tenant. With any facility, building permits and inspections are required. Life and safety requirements (including asbestos regulations) also apply to rented or contributed facilities.

Checklist for A Completed Application

- Description of proposed policy or business plan detailing how the charter school intends to:
 - Inform the community about the school,
 - Attract and enroll students including the proposed timeline,
 - Define an admissions preference system and law (i.e., siblings or children of teachers, etc.)
 - Maintain a wait list or conduct a lottery process, and
 - Conduct a student placement system if appropriate for education program.
- Description of how the school plans to identify and meet the learning needs of at-risk students, students with disabilities, English language learners (ELL), and gifted/talented students.
- Explanation of how the school plans to provide staff to meet the needs of special needs students.
- Explanation of parent involvement and volunteer requirements and opportunities after the school is open.
- Description or definition of partnerships or community involvement with the purpose and expectations of the plan .
- Explanation of the process used to transfer student records to or from the charter school.
- Description of proposed policy for student discipline, suspension, or expulsion that provides due process rights under the Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal act.
- The school addresses a child find process to address needs for adaptations or special education assessments and staffing.

- Clear indications are given that the school understands requirements to meet the needs of IEP's and ELL's and to comply with the requirements of IDEA and 504 plans. Include certified personnel, documentation, assessments, adaptations and modifications.
- Plans are in place to provide adequate staff to meet the needs of these students including a licensed special education teacher.
- Brief description of the charter school's transportation arrangements.
- Brief description of the charter school's food service program.
- Description of facility needs assessment including
 - How many instructional spaces are needed,
 - How many specialized spaces are needed (art, music, library, gym),
 - Number of bathrooms needed,
 - Number of offices needed,
 - Amount of common space needed, and
 - Amount of outdoor space needed
- Description of plan for identifying location (if not yet completed)
- Analysis of alignment between target location (or prospective sites if not affected by confidentiality issues) for school and facility needs assessment including:
 - Overall facility size given design of school's education program model,
 - Zoning and occupancy requirements
 - Assurance of compliance with applicable building codes,
 - Assurance of compliance with health and safety laws,
 - Assurance of compliance with the requirements of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), and
 - Identification of additional funding or financing needed to bring facility online with potential sources for needed funding and description of relationship and/or budget impacts if real estate consultants are involved.
 - Explanation of fund allocation based on estimated renovation costs, square foot needs per pupil and cost per square foot, average square foot costs in the intended location, and the percentage of budget designated for facility needs.
- This section should not exceed six pages.

Evaluation Criteria

A sound operations plan will have the following characteristics:

- A sound plan and timeline are in place to inform the community about the school, especially hard to reach stakeholders, and recruit the projected student population.
- In the proposed enrollment process, explanation of placement criteria is clear and visible to all students and parents.
- Thorough and realistic plan to identify and meet the learning needs of at-risk students, students with disabilities, gifted/talented students, and English language learners.
- Clear detail is given of the types of parent involvement and volunteer opportunities and requirements, if any.
- Discipline/suspension/expulsion process creates a safe and healthy environment for students and staff.
- Plans to provide transportation and food services for its pupils are clear and appropriate for school location and proposed student body.
- Financial plan addressing transportation and food service needs is viable.

- Proposed facility (or facility requirements identified in needs assessment) is sufficient for carrying out the school’s education program model and adequate for projected student enrollment.
- Proposed facility (if identified) meets all building codes, health and safety laws, ADA requirements, and current MDE Lease Aid requirements. Or a sound plan for completion of needed renovations is proposed and timely.
- Plan for locating facility (if not identified) is logical and timely.

(6B) Operations Plan Evaluation Rubric				
Reviewer Score	0 Failed to Provide	1 Inadequate	2 Adequate	3 Excellent
	Failed to Provide or was unclear and/or little evidence of understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	Most information provided and somewhat clear and/or minimal understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	All information provided and mostly clear and /or general understanding of criteria for starting a high-quality charter school	All information is very clearly presented and demonstrates exceptional understanding of criteria for starting and operating a high-quality charter school.
Strengths				
Concerns				
Additional Information or Conditions Needed				

ACNW

READER OVERALL ASSESSMENT & RECOMMENDATION

Would you recommend approval of this application?

No, incomplete application or does not meet minimum standards.

Yes, but only with additional information needed as listed below. I believe the school has the capacity for continuing to operate a high-quality charter school.

Yes, with conditions met as listed below. I believe the school has the capacity for continuing to operate a high-quality charter school.

Yes, I recommend unconditionally and I believe the founders have exceptional capacity to continue to operate a high-quality a charter school.

Overall Strengths of Application:	Component Reference #s
Overall Concerns and Additional Questions:	Component Reference #s
Information Needed or Concerns to be Met:	
Summary Comments:	

Signature of Reviewer: _____ **Date:** ____ __ 201__