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## **Charter School Application Table of Contents**

	<b>Page Numbers</b>
<b>I. Executive Summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II. School Foundation</b>	
<b>A. Need</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>B. Management Organization and/or Virtual     Schools</b>	<b>1-2</b>
<b>C. Vision &amp; Mission</b>	<b>2-3</b>
<b>D. Purpose</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>E. Learning Program</b>	<b>3-5</b>
<b>E. School Founders</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>III. Pre-Operational Planning</b>	
<b>A. Governance</b>	<b>6-7</b>
<b>B. Marketing Outreach     Enrollment/Admission</b>	<b>7-8</b>
<b>C. Facility</b>	<b>8-9</b>
<b>D. Calendar &amp; Transportation</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>E. Management Goals &amp; Challenges</b>	<b>9-11</b>
<b>IV. Fiscal Soundness</b>	
<b>A. Board Processes</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>B. Budget</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>C. Cash Flow</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>V. Other</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>VI. Required Attachments</b>	<b>12</b>



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## **Charter School Application**

### **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Provide a one-page overview of the proposed charter school. A quality application will include the following elements:

- A.** A brief explanation of why the founding group seeks to open a public charter school, including why the charter school is necessary at this time and in the proposed location;
- B.** Mission, vision, purpose(s);
- C.** Grade levels to be served and total student population;
- D.** Intended location;
- E.** Educational philosophy and instructional approach;
- F.** How the school will improve student learning and achievement in the intended community, the key design elements of the school's program, and the capacity of those implementing the program that would make it succeed where others have failed; and
- G.** How success of the school will be determined.

### **II. SCHOOL FOUNDATION:**

- A. Need.** Present a compelling reason for establishing the new charter school. A quality application will:
  - (1)** Clearly articulate the need and demand for a school in the location identified, including demographics for the intended neighborhood. Need is the reason(s) existing schools are insufficient or inadequate and includes state performance data. Demand is evidence of desire from prospective families to attend the school; see Attachment H requirements.
  - (2)** Describe the community support for an additional school in this area.
  - (3)** Identify the nearby district, charter, and private schools and the education programs already offered in the intended community.
- B. Management Organization and / or Virtual Schools.**
  - (1)** Management Organization. If the charter school would be established in conjunction with an educational service provider or management company, provide the name of such

entity and specify in detail the extent of the entity's participation in the management and operation of the school. A quality application will include the following:

- a. Academic, financial, and operational results of all current schools operated by the organization demonstrating the success of the management organization;
- b. List of all schools (with locations) operated by the organization within the most recent five years;
- c. List of all schools (with locations) operated by the organization within the most recent ten years that have closed;
- d. A term sheet indicating, at a minimum, the fees to be paid by the proposed school to the management company; the length of the proposed contract; the terms for the contract's renewal; all provisions for renewal and termination;
- e. Copies of the last two contracts that the entity has executed with operating charter schools and, if applicable, the status of those charter schools' applications for tax-exempt status under section 504(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; and
- f. Copy of the proposed management contract that sets forth proposed terms, including roles and responsibilities of the school governing board, the school staff, and the service provider; the services and resources to be provided; performance-evaluation measures and mechanisms; financial controls and oversight; investment disclosure;
- g. How the school will provide oversight of the management organization;
- h. Describe and explain existing or potential conflicts of interest between the school's governing board and management organization or affiliated business entities; and
- i. Explain in detail how and why the management organization or educational service provider was selected.

**(2) Virtual / Online Schools.** If the charter school will provide virtual or online programming, describe how its program will be delivered in compliance with applicable law. A quality application will provide the application submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), in addition to the MDE's approval communication.

**C. Vision & Mission.** Provide vision and mission statements that reflect the school's goals and purpose. A quality application will:

- (1)** Provide a clear, focused, and compelling Mission Statement for the school that reflects high-quality educational outcomes and achievable goals resulting in increased pupil learning and student achievement and includes the following components:
  - a. What the school seeks to accomplish;
  - b. Who the school seeks to serve;
  - c. To what degree; and
  - d. How the school will accomplish the goals, if methodology is an important aspect.
- (2)** Provide a response to the following question: How will the school know if it is achieving its mission as stated above?

- (3) Provide a vision statement that articulates the purposes the school expects to fulfill and measurable criteria by which the school may evaluate its success.

**D. Purpose.** Present how the new charter school supports Minnesota statutory purposes for charter schools. A quality application will:

- (1) Identify how the school will improve all pupil learning and all student achievement; identify how the school will report implementation of this purpose to the authorizer; and provide a comprehensive description of how the school's vision and mission are connected to, and how the school will achieve, this purpose.
- (2) Identify other statutory purposes for charter schools (see Minn. Stat. § 124E.01) the school intends to meet; identify how the school will report implementation of the additional purpose(s) to the authorizer; and provide a comprehensive description of how the school's vision and mission are connected to, and how the school will achieve, the identified purpose(s).
- (3) Based on the need identified above, describe the new and unique characteristics this school would provide to students that distinguish it relative to other education options available to students.

**E. Learning Program, Student Achievement & Accountability.** Present a high-quality educational program and goals for student achievement and accountability. A quality application will:

- (1) **Educational Philosophy & School Culture:** Describe the guiding educational philosophy and culture of this school which reflects the school's mission, vision, and values.
  - a. If the proposed charter school includes particular methods, strategies or programs for meeting the needs of students at risk of academic failure, include a description of the challenges faced in educating the targeted population and describe such methods, strategies and/or programs. Include in the description any diagnostic methods or instruments that will be used to identify and assess those students who are performing below grade-level as well as the processes/programs/tools to be used in providing them with remedial instruction.
  - b. If the proposed charter school would include any methods and strategies for dealing with other targeted student populations, attach a description of the targeted student population(s), how they would be identified (academic or other criteria) and describe such methods and strategies.
  - c. Describe the culture the school will develop and how it will measure success/attainment in this regard.
- (2) **Curricula, Tools, Methods, and Instructional Techniques:** Describe the proposed curricula, tools, methods and instructional techniques to be used that support the educational philosophy and that directly correlates to the school's mission and vision. Also include:

- a. Curricula Alignment with Minnesota State Standards: Describe the process the school will use to ensure the curricula will align with Minnesota State Academic Standards
  - b. Research Supporting Student Achievement: Cite and explain evidence demonstrating the educational model, curricula, tools, techniques, and teaching methods supporting student achievement (if applicable, identify schools involved) relevant to the target population.
- (3) Serving Traditionally Disadvantaged Students.** Identify the contribution the charter school's learning program will make in assisting educationally and economically disadvantaged students to succeed academically and cite evidence demonstrating same. Describe the services the school will provide for special populations, in addition to those described in (4) and (5) below.
- (4) Special Education:** Describe how this school will provide access to students with disabilities to a free appropriate education in the least restrictive environment in compliance with all laws.
- a. Provide a comprehensive description of the proposed Child Find process that will be used.
  - b. Provide the proposed school's methods and strategies for serving students with disabilities in compliance with all federal laws and regulations. Include:
    - 1. the kinds and types of services and related services the school is likely to provide directly and distinguished from a third party contract;
    - 2. the personnel that the school will devote to serving students with disabilities and the administrative responsibilities associated with special education;
    - 3. Explain how the school will assess, review, revise and implement the IEP; and
    - 4. Describe how the school will provide accommodations for students with disabilities who require extended services.
- (5) Student with Limited English Proficiency.** Provide a description of the program design, methods and strategies for serving students who are English Language Learners (ELLs) in accordance with all laws. Include:
- a. The process for the identification and placement of students whose first language is not English and the methods for determining the kinds of assistance that these students may need;
  - b. The manner in which the applicant will ensure that ELL students are not misplaced or tracked inappropriately in other classes (including those programs or classes designed to serve students with disabilities);
  - c. The strategies to ensure academic success;
  - d. The description of exit criteria and related objective assessment instruments and subjective methods that will ensure the appropriate student placement and monitoring of a student's progress over time;
  - e. Identify the staffing plan.
- (6) Gifted and Talented, High Achieving Students:** Describe how this school will provide services to gifted and talented and high achieving students.

**(7) Assessment Data:** Provide a detailed description how student learning will be assessed, evaluated, and monitored, including assessments for special populations. Provide a description of the assessments that will be used to determine how all student populations are meeting state performance standards. Indicate how the assessments will be aligned with state standards and how they will reliably and verifiably measure students' performance goals.

**(8) Accountability Goals -- Academic & Nonacademic Outcomes:** Identify growth-oriented and other accountability goals for students and the school upon which the initial charter will be based. For each goal, describe how the school will use assessment data to support the educational program described above.

**(9) Program Meeting / Exceeding Commissioner's Expectations for Public Schools.** Describe how the educational program and accountability outcomes are designed to meet or exceed the outcomes established by the Minnesota Commissioner of Education for Public Schools.

**F. School Founders.** Describe the school founders and how they are well-positioned to plan and develop a new high-quality charter school. A quality application will present evidence of the founders' capacity to execute its plan successfully and:

**(1)** For each person identified on the Founder Contact List, include the following information:

- a. Describe his/her experience and/or involvement in K-12 education, including Minnesota Teacher License number, if any;
- b. Describe his/her experience with the design and operation of a charter school;
- c. Describe his/her expected role and responsibilities during the school's pre-operational planning period;
- d. Describe his/her experience and capabilities ;
- e. Indicate whether s/he intends to become a member of the interim board of directors;
- f. Indicate if s/he intends to apply for employment in the charter school; and
- g. Describe his/her affiliation(s) with other founders and current/potential consultants and vendor organizations.
- h. Identify the date of the most recent background check obtained and whether adverse information was identified.
- i. Identify the date of the most recent background check obtained and whether adverse information was identified.

**(2)** List the proposed members of the initial board of directors for the charter school, including the information in (1)(a)-(g) for each for each person not otherwise provided in 1, indicating any ex-officio members and if any seat is proposed to be non-voting. Also indicate any vacant positions expected to be filled.

### III. PRE-OPERATIONAL PLANNING:

- A. Governance.** Describe a plan to ensure effective, accountable, and representative governance over the school's operations. A quality application will:
- (1) Responsibilities. Describe the responsibilities and obligations of the charter school board. Describe the board's role in academic success, operations, and financial matters, and how the board will strategically engage in planning and oversight in each of these areas. Describe, with specificity, the plan to ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. Describe how the board will ensure its policies and procedures promote academic success, accountability, and compliance.
  - (2) Board Recruitment: Describe specific expertise/characteristics sought in yet-to-be recruited board members and explain the added value of those characteristics.
  - (3) Board Training: Describe the plan for initial training of the board during the school's pre-operational planning period and for ongoing board training and development once the school opens.
  - (4) Parent Involvement. Describe how parents will be involved in the charter school, including, in particular, the governance and administration of the charter school and note whether a parent organization is anticipated.
  - (5) Parent, Family, and Community Involvement: Describe how parents of potential students have been involved to date in the planning and program design of the charter school. Describe the board's strategy for engaging and involving parents of potential students (including stepparents, guardians, etc.) and other members of the community in the planning, program design, and implementation of this charter school.
  - (6) Personnel Policies. Describe the proposed school's personnel policies. The description should include at least the following information:
    - a. The proposed procedures for hiring and dismissing school personnel; and
    - b. The school's proposed qualifications for hiring teachers, school administrators and other employees.
  - (7) Plan for fulfilling Board Obligations: Describe how the interim board will develop policy during the pre-operational planning period to ensure the board governs the charter public school in compliance with federal, state and local requirements.
  - (8) Describe the specific plan and timeline for the development of:
    - a. Personnel policies (including the creation of job descriptions, an employee performance management program, etc.);
    - b. Procurement policies and procedures for contracting with vendors and consultants that are fair and open and that avoid apparent and actual conflicts of interest;
    - c. Conflict of interest policies;
    - d. Travel approval and reimbursement policies; and

e. Other required policies.

**B. Marketing, Outreach, Enrollment & Admission.** Describe a marketing and outreach plan, based on the compelling need identified above, to ensure open access to all and full enrollment. A quality application will:

(1) Identify the number of students expected to attend the school each year by grade level in the following table (add additional columns if it will take more than five years to reach full enrollment). Use the following format to submit student enrollment information for each year of the proposed charter term. The student enrollment information must include:

- a. The grades that the school would serve;
- b. The ages of the students to be served in each grade;
- c. The number of students to be served in each grade;
- d. The number of children expected in each class; and
- e. The total number of enrolled students each year of the charter term.

If providing kindergarten, please indicate the minimum age that the school will require a child to have attained and by what date to be eligible for enrollment.

Grades	# Classes Per Grade	# Students Per Class	Ages	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
K								
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
<b>Total # Students</b>								

(2) Provide the rationale for the growth plan submitted. In your rationale address the reason(s) for choosing to serve the identified population of students, including the grades specified and the number of students in grade.

(3) Describe how students in the community will be informed about this charter school and will be given an equal opportunity to attend this charter school.



- (4) If the charter school intends to implement a dress code policy, explain how the cost of any uniform will be accessible for parents unable to afford them.
- (5) Discuss how this school will intentionally and specifically conduct outreach to educationally and economically disadvantaged and hard-to-reach populations.
  - a. Describe the specific efforts to attract and retain a comparable or greater enrollment of limited English proficient students when compared to the enrollment figures for such students in the traditional district in which the charter school will be located. Include a description of planned outreach, including strategies for communicating with parents who are not proficient in English.
  - b. Describe the specific efforts to attract and retain a comparable or greater enrollment of students who are educationally and economically disadvantaged students when compared to the traditional district in which the charter school will be located.
  - c. Describe the specific efforts to attract and retain a comparable or greater enrollment of students with disabilities when compared to the enrollment figures for such students in the traditional district in which the charter school will be located.
  - d. Describe the specific strategies and resources the school will engage if the schools efforts in a – c are unsuccessful.
- (6) Describe how the school will conduct an open admissions process including the use of a lottery to provide equal access to all students who apply.
- (7) Provide evidence of significant community support for, and interest in, the proposed charter school sufficient to allow the school to reach its anticipated enrollment. Include any methods or strategies that have been used to gauge community support for the charter school.
- (8) Describe the deliberate and intentional strategies the school will utilize to ensure equal access and equivalent opportunities for all students once enrolled in the school.

**C. Facility Plan.** Describe a plan to secure an appropriate and adequate facility that meets the unique needs of the school and complies with a health and safety and building code requirements. A quality application will:

- (1) Facility Needs Planning Process:
  - a. Describe the school’s plan, including the timeline and process, for determining space needs appropriate to the program and enrollment; and
  - b. Describe results of a preliminary facility needs assessment.
- (2) Facility Selection Process:
  - a. Describe the school’s plan, including the timeline, process and milestones to be met in locating and evaluating potential facilities and selecting a building for lease that is

affordable, provides adequate space and meets all health and safety and public building code requirements.

b. Provide a description of any potential facilities that have been identified.

(3) If the charter school founders, applicants, partners, intended board members, or related parties, intend to own or lease its facility to the charter school, provide a description of the ownership or lease arrangement of the facility, including indicating specifically any potential conflicts-of-interest and arrangements by which such conflicts will be managed or avoided.

**D. Calendar & Transportation.** Describes a calendar that reflects the school's goals, purposes and proposed learning program. Describe transportation arrangements consistent with the calendar and learning program. A quality application will:

(1) Describe the calendar the school plans to use.

- a. Identify the unique characteristics of the school's proposed calendar;
- b. Describe how this proposed calendar lends itself to the school's mission and vision;
- c. Provide total number of teacher contract days;
- d. Indicate the total number of student instructional days and total instructional hours, identifying any differences by grade;
- e. The first and last day of classes;
- f. Planned holidays and other days off, as well as planned half days.
- g. Provide the planned length of the student instructional day (excluding meals);
- h. Provide a description or outline of a "typical day" at the new school. [A typical day for elementary grade will be as follows...].

(2) Provide a copy of the proposed weekly schedule, including:

- a. The total number of hours/minutes of instruction per week;
- b. The minimum number of hours the school will devote to core academic subjects in each grade, e.g. English language arts, mathematics, and science;
- c. The length of the school day (including the approximate start and dismissal times of the school day); and,
- d. A sample schedule.

(3) Provide a description of transportation service options, the school's planned transportation arrangements, and how the planned arrangements will meet the needs of all students including the traditionally disadvantaged.

**E. Management Goals & Challenges.** Describe a plan to ensure effective and transparent management of the school's operations. A quality application will:

(1) Organizational Chart. Provide an organizational chart for the school and narrative description of the chart. The chart should clearly indicate the reporting structures of staff to the board, and staff to the school leader(s). The narrative should describe how the school will operate, including administration, management, and governance, and the

- roles and responsibilities of school leadership, governing board, instructional leaders, and their relationship to each other. If the charter school intends to contract with an entity for management services, the organizational chart should also reflect that relationship and the narrative should include a discussion of the role of the management company or organization.
- (2) **Staff.** Provide a list of instructional staff for the first school year. The list should indicate and identify classroom teachers, and any teaching aides or assistants, as well as any specialty teachers. In addition, the list should identify the number of instructional personnel in each classroom, e.g. one teacher, one teaching assistant, one paraprofessional for each class.
  - (3) **Organizational Structure.** Explain how this organizational structure is consistent with the mission and vision of the proposed charter school.
  - (4) **Leader Attributes.** Provide a description of the specific attributes you will look for in a school leader or leaders, depending on your organizational model. Additionally, discuss the model ultimately proposed for the use in the school.
  - (5) **Hiring Process.** Describe anticipated hiring challenges/obstacles. Describe the fair and open process the interim board will use for recruiting and hiring the school leader, finance manager, auditor, and school personnel, including:
    - a. The timeline for developing a job description for the school leader and then recruiting and hiring the school leader;
    - b. How the board will recruit potential candidates who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age or disability; and
    - c. Whether the board plans to hire a temporary start-up coordinator and, if so, how this person will be identified.
  - (6) **Recruiting.** Describe the school's strategy and process for recruiting and hiring other school employees that are qualified to effectively serve the unique needs of the projected student population.
  - (7) **Professional Development.** Describe how the school's professional development program will assist teachers in meeting student academic needs and school goals by addressing identified shortcomings in student learning and teacher pedagogical skill and content knowledge. In developing the school's professional development program, consideration should be given to:
    - a. Ensuring that the proposed school will allocate sufficient resources to support a comprehensive professional development program;
    - b. Ensuring that the content of the program aligns with the school's mission, curriculum, instruction, and assessment strategies;
    - c. Ensuring that annual plans are derived from a school needs-assessment, based on identified instructional weaknesses, teacher interest, and analyses of student outcomes;

- d. Ensuring that the school earmarks effective, ongoing support and training to novice teachers and teachers new to the school and/or teaching profession; and ensuring that the professional development program is systematically evaluated to determine its effectiveness.
- (8) Orientation/Development. Describe how the school will provide employees with initial and ongoing orientation and professional development about the mission, vision and outcomes of the school.

#### IV. FISCAL SOUNDNESS.

- A. Board Processes.** Describe the school's fiscal management plan. A quality application will describe the school's process to:
- a. Develop and approve the budget;
  - b. Monitor the financial condition of the school;
  - c. Select financial manager(s) and auditor; and
  - d. Describe the policies related to financial management the board intends to adopt, if any.
- B. Budget.** Provide a start-up budget plus a 3-year operating budget for the charter school. A quality application will include the planned timetable, detailed and reasonable / viable assumptions for all revenue and expenditures for each year demonstrating operational viability based on such revenue, and include alternative budgets if enrollment does not meet projections. See sample budget template for reference. Note: operational viability means that the school operates with annual surpluses.
- C. Cash Flow.** Provide a cash flow projection for the developing year and first operational year. A quality application will include detailed and reasonable / viable assumptions reflecting an understanding of charter school monetary flow, and describe with specificity viable strategies if confronted with cash flow challenges. See sample template for reference.

#### Notes:

- (1) For any contributions or grant funds (public or private) in the school budget, provide letters of commitment from the funding sources detailing the amounts and any required uses for / limitations on the funding. Note: A school may submit a budget with uncommitted grant funds provided a reasonable and viable budget is also provided without those funds.
- (2) For assumptions, provide the source for numbers used and calculations. The reader must be able to understand how the numbers in the budget and cash flow were calculated. See sample templates.

#### V. Other:

- A.** Application to Other Authorizers: Indicate whether you have submitted or will submit a substantially similar application to another authorizer for this application. If so, provide the name of the authorizer, the date (or intended date) the application was submitted, and the status of the application.
- B.** Prior Applications: Indicate whether you have previously applied for a charter from another authorizer. If so, provide the name of the authorizer, the date the application was submitted and the status of the application. If the application was denied, provide a copy of the letter from the charter entity stating reasons for denial. If the application was withdrawn, provide the reasons for withdrawal. If the application was approved, but the charter school is no longer in existence, provide an explanation.
- C.** (Optional): Provide additional information you believe would be helpful to evaluate your application.

## **VI. Required Attachments:**

- A.** Articles of Incorporation
- B.** Proposed bylaws
- C.** Proposed conflict of interest policy
- D.** Statement of assurances signed by all founders
- E.** Statement signed by all founders that the school agrees to the terms of the charter base contract (no exhibits) without modification
- F.** Founder contact list
- G.** Founder resumes
- H.** Contact information for families, representing at least 100 students, interested in enrolling in the school in its first year of operation, identifying, by family, by grade level the number of children/students in the proposed opening year. Deviations from this requirement, with compelling rationale, may be considered by Student Achievement Minnesota, in SAM's sole discretion.