

WISCONSIN CHARTER SCHOOL

Authorizer Model Application Process



Authorizer Model Application Process

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview, Purpose, and Process	
Overview.....	3
Purpose.....	4
Solicitation of Charter School Applications.....	5
Procedures.....	6
Model Application	
Model Application Process.....	7
Model Application Parts A.....	8
Model Application Parts B.....	12
Evaluation & Determination	
Evaluation Procedures.....	14
Evaluation Timeline.....	15
Evaluation Rubric.....	17

OVERVIEW, PURPOSE, AND PROCESS

APPLICATION OVERVIEW

Authorizers in Wisconsin may be public school districts or one of the statutorily identified independent authorizers such as some institutes of higher education, technical colleges, and other entities approved by the legislature.

Under the Wisconsin Charter School Law (118.40), charter schools may be authorized in three ways:

1. Pursuant to 118.40(2m), by a public school district either as an “instrumentality” in which case the school district employs all charter school employees. Or, the charter school can be a “non-instrumentality” in which case the school district does not employ any charter school personnel.
2. Pursuant to 118.40(2r), by the Common Council of the City of Milwaukee, the chancellor of any of the University of Wisconsin System institutions, each Technical College-district board, Waukesha County Executive, College of Menominee Nation or the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College. These charter schools would be authorized as “independent” and considered “non-instrumentality” schools since the employees of the school are not employed by any school district but are instead employed by the operating organization of the charter school. They are further classified as “2R” charter schools due to the legislation section number enabling their authorization.
3. Finally, pursuant to 118.40(2x), by the UW-System Office of Educational Opportunity. These charter schools would be authorized as “independent” and “non-instrumentality” and are further classified as “2X” charter schools due to the legislation section enabling their authorization.

Wisconsin law identifies three paths that persons interested in forming a charter school might take to seek authorization of the charter school,

1. A charter school may be authorized by a school district board in response to a petition by the employees of the school district (For more information about filing a petition, see the WRCCS resource, “Legal Requirements for School Board Charter School Authorizers Frequently Asked Questions”).
2. The school district board may initiate the process of authorizing a charter school through an application process.
3. One of the other entities empowered to authorize a charter school may consider authorizing the charter school through an application process.

Pursuant to Wisconsin s. 115.001(16), a virtual charter school in which all or a portion of the instruction is provided through means of the Internet, and the pupils enrolled in and instructional staff employed by the school are geographically remote from each other can only contract with and be authorized by a district school board.



Pursuant with Wisconsin State Statute 118.40, charter school authorizers in the State of Wisconsin must do all of the following:

1. Solicit and evaluate charter school applications.
2. Approve only high-quality charter school applications that meet identified educational needs and promote a diversity of educational choices.
3. Consider the National Association of Charter School Authorizers' Principles and Standards
4. In accordance with the terms of the contract, monitor the performance and compliance with §118.40, Wis. Stats., of each charter school with which it contracts.
5. Annually, submit to the state superintendent and to the legislature a report that includes the following for each charter school under contract with it:
 - a. an identification of each operating, revoked, non-renewed, closed and developing charter school
 - b. the academic and financial performance of each charter school
 - c. the operating costs incurred related to points 1-5, detailed in an audited financial statement
 - d. an itemized accounting of the cost of services provided by the authorizer to charter schools under contract

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document is intended to serve as a guide for authorizers to assist them in developing and implementing a process of soliciting and evaluating charter school applications. Further, this guide will help authorizers in understanding and adhering to Wisconsin State Statute 118.40.

For further technical assistance, authorizers should contact the Wisconsin Resource Center for Charter Schools.



SOLICITATION OF CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

The statutory provisions affecting authorizers do not specify requirements for soliciting and evaluating charter school applications. However, authorizers should consider the NACSA principles and standards for quality charter schools. These standards include requirements for a comprehensive application process and rigorous evaluation criteria. For further guidance, authorizers should consider utilizing the Wisconsin Charter School Authorizer Best Practices document.

Annually, each authorizer must solicit proposals for high quality charter schools. Each authorizer's solicitation for proposals should:

1. Present the authorizer's strategic vision for chartering, including a clear statement of any preferences the authorizer wishes to grant to applications that employ proven methods for educating at-risk students or students with special needs
2. Include or otherwise direct applicants to the performance rubric that the authorizer has developed for charter school oversight and evaluation
3. Provide the criteria that will guide the authorizer's decision to approve or deny a charter application
4. State clear, appropriately detailed questions as well as guidelines concerning the format and content essential for applicants to demonstrate the capacities necessary to establish and operate a successful charter school

Authorizers should annually consider:

1. Developing a solicitation document (see sample below).
2. The community context and demographics in their authorizing locale so that maximum exposure for solicitation of applications can be achieved
3. The means by which they will solicit applications such as:
 - Posting strategic social media updates
 - Publishing solicitation information on their website(s)
 - Creating email newsletter(s) to constituents in their community
 - Authorizer/board meeting agendas and minutes
 - Posting the solicitation for applications document in multiple locations - electronically and physically - in their community

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Authorizers should consider utilizing the following procedures for approving successful charter school applications and denying unsuccessful applications:

1. Application Part A and Part B submitted Detailed Proposals must be submitted using the required format.
 2. The Authorizer shall review each Detailed Proposal using the Model Rubric for the Evaluation of Charter School Applications. The Authorizer may designate the review of Application Part A or B so long as the individual or entity identified to carry-out the review was not on the Charter Application Review Committee charged with reviewing the Application.
 3. Copies of each Detailed Proposal, along with the Model Rubric for the Evaluation of Charter School Applicants shall be sent to the Authorizer's Board for further review and consideration.
 4. Prior to a final consideration, the Authorizer Board shall hold a public hearing on the proposal. In consideration of making these accessible for all, the authorizer board shall consider conducting this meeting virtually.
 5. Following the review of the Applications, the Authorizer shall provide a written recommendation to the Authorizer Board. Such recommendation must be provided to the Authorizer Board prior to the Board making a decision on whether to enter into a charter contract with the applicant.
 6. After the public hearing, the Authorizer Board shall determine whether to enter into a contract to establish a charter school. In making its decision, the Authorizer Board shall, at a minimum, consider:
 - a. the information included in the detailed applications (Part A and B)
 - b. whether or not the requirements of Authorizer Board policy have been met
 - c. the level of employee and parental support for the establishment of the charter school
 - d. the fiscal sustainability of the school and the overall impact of the establishment of the charter school on the community within the Authorizer's purview.
- *Note specific dates that the applying school will need to know for streamlining the process.
7. Following the decision to authorize a charter school, the Authorizer must finalize the contract with the chartering governing board

Authorizer Model Application

[adaptable sample language for developing application process]

APPLICATION PROCESS

[Adapt sections related to authorizer name and date/time examples to meet the needs of local authorizers]*

SAMPLE SOLICITATION FOR PROPOSALS

[Authorizer Name]* is seeking applicants from those proposing to open a public charter school. Applicants should consider innovative school options such as Project Based Learning, STEAM or STEM-based models, and Arts Integration models. Priority will be given to applications that seek to reduce the achievement gap with a proven method for increasing student achievement.

Potential applicants should send letters notifying the [Authorizer Name]* of their intent to submit an application to open a public charter school not later than [date/time]*. Such correspondence should be directed to the President or Director of the Authorizer.

APPLICATION PROCESS: PART A

Applicants may submit Part A of a charter school application on or before [date/ time]*. If Part A of the application is submitted by [date/time]*, the [Authorizer Name]* will review and provide feedback as to material deficiencies in the application by [date/time]*. [Authorizer Name]* may also decide to meet with the applicant to seek clarification on the submitted application. The applicant shall then have until [date/time]* to resubmit a revised and final application. The [Authorizer Name]* may approve Part A of the application.

APPLICATION PROCESS: PART B

Part B of the application for a public charter school that is to be opened at the beginning of the next school year, or to be opened at a time agreed to by the applicant and the [Authorizer Name]*, will be accepted no later than [date/time]*, on the submission deadline of [date/time]*, or before. If the submission deadline falls on a non-business day, the deadline shall be postponed to [date/time]* on the next business day.

Applications may be mailed or hand delivered but receipt by the [Authorizer Name]* must be on or before the deadline.

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

[Authorizer] does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all.*



This resource was developed by WRCCS at CESA 9 between 2018-2023 with funding from Wisconsin's \$95 million dollar federal Charter Schools Program grant from the U.S. Department of Education. See wrccs.org for more information.

MODEL APPLICATION PART A PART A REQUIREMENTS

Identifying Information

Name of organization
Year Founded
Name of primary applicant

Contact Information

Street Address
Address Line 2
City, State, Zip/Postal Code
Email and Phone Number

SCHOOL LEADERS AND BOARD MEMBERS

Provide the names, professional affiliation (current job), and role in the proposed school for all school leaders and board members. Complete for each.

School Leader or Board Member Name (First, Last)	Professional Affiliation	Role in Proposed School

PURPOSE AND BRIEF HISTORY OF ORGANIZATION

As an example: Is this a new non-profit created for this proposed school, or is it an existing non-profit seeking to expand or replicate its portfolio?

ATTACH EVIDENCE OF INCORPORATION

(Contract cannot be executed without proof of incorporation.) Prior to completion of PART B proof of incorporation is required.

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND

Please complete by checking or providing information to all applicable questions below.

Do you currently operate a school? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is your school a <input type="checkbox"/> New School (Never in existence in the past) <input type="checkbox"/> Replication (New school using an existing model in your district or elsewhere) <input type="checkbox"/> Conversion (If checked please complete following question)
Complete ONLY if checked Conversion School above. Type of proposed Conversion School:

<input type="checkbox"/> Converting from private to public <input type="checkbox"/> Converting from one authorizer to another <input type="checkbox"/> Converting from non-charter to charter	
Is your charter school a virtual school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Where exactly would the school be located?	
What academic school year would the school first open?	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2020-2021 <input type="checkbox"/> 2021-2022 <input type="checkbox"/> 2022-2023 <input type="checkbox"/> 2023-2024	
Are you applying for a charter with any other authorizers this year?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
If you replied YES to the question above, list the authorizer(s) you are applying with.	
1. 2. 3.	
Have you applied for authorization of this concept to any authorizer before?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

MODEL APPLICATION PART B

PART B REQUIREMENTS

Please complete this prospectus in no more than 20 pages, save it as a PDF when complete, and submit the completed PDF and any related attachments. The prospectus has not been officially submitted until you receive confirmation of a successful submission.

1. Mission/Vision Statement for the Charter School

- a. What is the clear and documented need this school will fulfill in the community?
- b. What is the mission of the school?
- c. Describe how you will know the school is successful after 5 years.

2. How would the school increase educational equity, incubate innovations, and/or increase the use of underutilized best educational practices?

3. Describe how the charter school plans to serve special populations (i.e. educationally disadvantaged students – special ed., ELL, etc.) and demonstrate inclusion for All students.

4. If education is to be delivered through a virtual or blended format, how will the educational plan ensure equity and access in learning design?

5. Description of the school/program.

- a. Age range(s) and grades to be taught:
- b. Projected number of students, pupil teacher ratios and general staffing patterns:
- c. How students will be recruited and general admission policy:

6. What are the special issues or characteristics of the school?

7. Describe the philosophy of this school in relation to organization, curriculum and instructional strategies

8. Describe the curricular focus and instructional strategies that will define the school

9. Describe the methodology by which this program improves the educational opportunities and outcomes for students. What evidence exists that suggests this model has demonstrated positive achievement outcomes?

10. Explain the proposed governance structure for this school. How do educators, students, families, and community leaders each participate in a meaningful way?



- 11. What is the financial capability of the organization seeking the charter and the relationship between the charter school and the authorizer?** (For example, if the charter is being authorized by a district board of education, will the fiscal relationship coincide with the district's current fiscal model or will an outside fiscal agent be sought.)

- 12. Where is the potential location of the school? What makes this location advantageous to all stakeholders?**

- 13. Provide evidence of support from the community.**

- 14. Provide a draft business plan for school development and first-year operation.**

- 15. What are potential subcontracts (partners) that might be part of the school's operation?**

EVALUATION AND DETERMINATION

MODEL PROCEDURES FOR THE EVALUATION OF CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

Conducting a thorough evaluation of a charter school application requires a team of individuals bringing the diverse expertise needed to evaluate all aspects of the application. Charter schools are complex organizations that require strong educational, financial, legal, facilities, governance, and management plans.

Evaluating the quality of an applicant's plans and capacities in all these areas requires people with a range of experience, expertise and skill. Securing sufficiently broad and deep expertise within their own organizations may not be feasible for some authorizers. Many engage third-party evaluators who can add specialized expertise, credibility, and balance to the process. Authorizers may want to consider including third-party evaluators of charter school applications.

The following steps provide a framework for authorizers to conduct a quality evaluation of charter applications and should be taken into consideration as part of the process:

1. Written application evaluation through the use of an application rubric to rigorously assess the quality of the school's plans in core design areas.
2. Applicant capacity interview to assess the capacity to implement the plan as described in the written application.
3. Solicitation of public input which can take the form of public hearings or a request for written testimony.



MODEL TIMELINE FOR THE EVALUATION OF CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

The following timeline is meant to be utilized as a guideline for authorizers. Each authorizer should review the timeline within their own setting to determine the best dates for local authorizer application requirements.

The [sample dates]* are placeholders for authorizers to change in relation to individual organizational needs. Authorizers should consider relevant administrative dates related to school formation by consulting the Wisconsin DPI to meet statutory guidelines.

Step	Action	*Date
1	Application Part A submitted Detailed Proposal must be submitted using the required format	January
2	Application Part B submitted Detailed Proposal must be submitted using the required format	March
3	The Authorizer shall review each Detailed Proposal using the Model Rubric for the Evaluation of Charter School Applications The Authorizer may designate the review of Application Part A or B so long as the individual or entity identified to carry-out the review was not on the Charter Application Review Committee charged with reviewing the Application.	April
4	Copies of each detailed proposal, along with the Model Rubric for the Evaluation of Charter School Applicants shall be sent to the Authorizer's Board for further review and consideration.	May
5	Prior to a final consideration, the Authorizer Board shall hold a public hearing on the proposal.	July
6	Following the review of the Applications, the Authorizer shall provide a written recommendation to the Authorizer Board. Such recommendation must be provided to the Authorizer Board prior to the Board making a decision on whether to enter into a charter contract with the applicant.	August
Step	Action	*Date
	After the public hearing, the Authorizer Board shall determine whether to enter into a contract to establish a charter school. In	

7	<p>making its decision, the Authorizer Board shall, at a minimum, consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The information included in the detailed applications (Part A and B) ● Whether or not the requirements of Authorizer Board policy have been met ● The level of employee and parental support for the establishment of the charter school ● The fiscal sustainability of the school and the overall impact of the establishment of the charter school on the community within the Authorizer’s purview. <p>* Note specific dates that the applying school will need to know for streamlining the process.</p>	September
8	Following the decision to authorize a charter school, the Authorizer must finalize the contract with the chartering governing board.	October
9	Authorizer will work with the school to determine the earliest possible school opening.	November

MODEL RUBRIC FOR THE EVALUATION OF CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

INTRODUCTION AND GUIDELINES

The Model Rubric for the Evaluation of Charter School Applications guides Authorizers and reviewers through an assessment of the key elements needed to design, manage, and operate a quality charter school consistent with Wisconsin state law. Each section restates the application request and provides criteria for evaluating the applicant's response to the request. For each section, applicants are asked to determine whether the response meets, partially meets, or does not meet the principle and/or requirement.

This rubric and review process is intended to assist authorizers and applicants to build a stronger blueprint from which to build their schools. The hard work up front translates into greater autonomy for schools once chartered.

The following definitions should be utilized to guide your assessment:

- Within each section, your rating and accompanying comments for the section should apply and reference those criteria.
- Your comments and evidence within the 'summary notes' field are important and should be a key component of your evaluation.

Meets the Requirement

- The response demonstrates a thorough understanding of key issues and demonstrates capacity to open and operate a quality charter school. It addresses the topic with specific evidence that shows thorough preparation and presents a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate.

Partially Meets the Requirement

- The response meets some of the criteria, but lacks meaningful detail or requires additional information in one or more key areas.

Does Not Meet the Requirement

- The response lacks meaningful detail; demonstrates lack of preparation; and/or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the applicant's understanding of and ability to implement an effective plan, including if the respondent does not respond to the required section.

SUMMARY NOTES

Strengths

- Use the strengths box to identify notable positive aspects of the response.

Concerns and Additional Questions

- Use the concerns and additional questions area to identify questions and concerns that have an impact on whether the application should be approved.

TECHNICAL REVIEW

Number	Technical Requirements	Included	Not Included
1	Identifying Information		
2	Contact Information		
3	School Leaders and Board Members		
4	Purpose and Brief History of Organization		
5	Evidence of Incorporation		
6	Potential Subcontracts for School Operation (not mandatory)		

MODEL RUBRIC

THE EVALUATION OF CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

Indicator	Substantive Requirement	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Summary Notes
1	Identifying Information The proposed school has a strong organizational background explicitly stating the NEEDS for the start-up organization.				<i>Strengths:</i> <i>Concerns and additional questions:</i>
2	Mission/Vision The proposed school's mission and vision statement are in alignment with the documented NEED for the school.				<i>Strengths:</i> <i>Concerns and additional questions:</i>
3	Equity, innovation, increase best practices The proposed school has been designed to increase equity while focusing on innovative best practices.				<i>Strengths:</i> <i>Concerns and additional questions:</i>
4	Serving special populations The proposed school has been designed serve the needs of educationally disadvantaged students				<i>Strengths:</i> <i>Concerns and additional questions:</i>
5	Description of the school program The school program is clearly defined				<i>Strengths:</i> <i>Concerns and additional questions:</i>
6	Special issues or characteristics of the School The proposed school's program includes a specific focus defining the characteristics				<i>Strengths:</i> <i>Concerns and additional questions:</i>

Indicator	Substantive Requirement	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Summary Notes
	of the school				
7	<p>Philosophy of this school in relation to organization, curriculum and instructional strategies</p> <p>The proposed school’s philosophy is in alignment with the curricular and Instructional strategies</p>				<p><i>Strengths:</i></p> <p><i>Concerns and additional questions:</i></p>
8	<p>Curricular focus and instructional strategies that define the school</p> <p>The proposed school has a strong academic program with the potential to raise the achievement of the intended student population.</p>				<p><i>Strengths:</i></p> <p><i>Concerns and additional questions:</i></p>
9	<p>Methodology to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for students</p> <p>The proposed school has a strong pedagogical approach that is likely to increase educational opportunities for students</p>				<p><i>Strengths:</i></p> <p><i>Concerns and additional questions:</i></p>
10	<p>Proposed governance structure for this school</p> <p>The proposed governance structure provide rigorous oversight, governance and support for the school</p>				<p><i>Strengths:</i></p> <p><i>Concerns and additional questions:</i></p>
11	<p>Financial capability of the organization seeking the charter</p> <p>The proposed education corporation/school has a financial planning process to maintain a financially viable school</p>				<p><i>Strengths:</i></p> <p><i>Concerns and additional questions:</i></p>

Indicator	Substantive Requirement	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Summary Notes
12	<p>Potential location</p> <p>The proposed school would be located in a community that presents a compelling need for the school</p>				<p><i>Strengths:</i></p> <p><i>Concerns and additional questions:</i></p>
13	<p>Evidence of community support</p> <p>The proposal provides evidence of effective efforts to involve the intended community in the proposed school</p>				<p><i>Strengths:</i></p> <p><i>Concerns and additional questions:</i></p>
14	<p>Business plan for school development and first-year operation</p> <p>The proposed school has an adequate business structure to support start-up and growth</p>				<p><i>Strengths:</i></p> <p><i>Concerns and additional questions:</i></p>

MODEL RUBRIC

THE EVALUATION OF CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATIONS (continued)

OVERALL RECOMMENDATION

Would you recommend that this application is approved for a public charter school? Explain your recommendation in the Summary Comments section below.

Check one (required)

- Approve
- Approve with Revisions (as noted in rubric)
- Deny

SUMMARY COMMENTS

Summarize your assessment of the application focusing on key strengths and concerns, as applicable.