



CHARTER APPLICATION

Recognized Best Practices

Regulatory Framework

An application must be submitted to an authorizing body to obtain a contract to organize and operate a charter public school. Pursuant to the Revised School Code ([MCL 380.502](#)), the application shall include the following:

- Identification of the applicant for the contract.
- A list of the proposed members of the board of directors of the charter public school and a description of the qualifications and method for appointment or election of members of the board of directors.
- The proposed articles of incorporation.
- Documentation meeting the application requirements of the authorizing body, including the following:
 - the governance structure of the school.
 - the educational goals, curricula and methods of pupil assessment.
 - the admission policy.
 - the school calendar and school day schedule.
 - the age or grade range of pupils to be enrolled.
 - descriptions of staff responsibilities and of the public charter school's governance structure.
 - for an application to the board of a school district, an intermediate school board, or board of a community college, identification of the local and intermediate school districts in which the school will be located.
 - an agreement that the school will comply with state and federal law.
 - a description of and address of the proposed physical plant in which the school will be located.

See MCL 580.502(3) for details and additional requirements.

MCCSA Guiding Principles and Standards

MCCSA has adopted Principles and Standards that guide authorizers as they develop strong authorizing practices. Focusing on performance and accountability ensures that student success remains paramount to authorizing decisions. MCCSA Standards suggest that the application process should:

- Provide for first-time applicants as well as experienced operators.
- Encourage expansion and replication of charter public schools demonstrating success.

- Allow for autonomy while encouraging innovation.
- Be rigorous and transparent, ensuring authorizer expectations are clearly stated and legal requirements are met.

The MCCSA Standards also suggest that the application review should consider:

- The charter public school's performance goals.
- A compelling and realistic vision.
- A sound and sustainable business and financial plan.
- The will and capacity to effectively implement the plan.

Application Process Best Practices

The authorizer should establish an application process that is objective, transparent, shares the authorizer's goals and expectations and clearly explains the process, steps and timeline. It should result in the authorizer completing a thorough review to gain confidence that the applicant has a promising vision and the ability to implement. The process should ensure that only schools likely to improve educational outcomes for students are granted a charter.

A best practice application process will include the following steps:

- Proposal or letter of intent, if applicable – Some authorizers require a short proposal or letter of intent to be submitted prior to being allowed to submit an application.
- Application– The applicant submits the application for review.
- Initial Review (Phase I) – The application is reviewed by an expert panel who assesses whether the proposed school is in the best interest of the students and the community. The review should be rigorous and focused on academic, operational, and financial plans. Often authorizers will use internal and external reviewers to ensure the integrity of the process.
- Due Diligence – The authorizer should perform due diligence on the applicant to gain an understanding of their previous experience operating a school and their track record of success.
- Applicant Meeting Review (Phase II) – The applicant(s) are interviewed by the authorizer review panel to gain a deeper understanding of the applicant's ability to execute their vision and to gather additional information that was not included in the written application.
- Final Review and Recommendation – The review team completes any necessary additional reviews and determines if the applicant will be recommended for authorization.
- Approval - The authorizing body considers the recommendation for approval.
- Preoperational Phase – The approved applicant and the authorizer work together to complete and execute the charter contract and ensure a successful launch of the school.

Reflective Questions:

What makes a strong and compelling application?

Why should an authorizer use an expert panel with external members to review an application?

Resources

[New School Application and Review Process](#)

[New School Application Rubric](#)

[New School Application Cycle](#)

[New School Application Process](#)

[New School Application](#)