



Minnesota Office of Charter Authorizing Charter School Change in Authorizer Application

The sole purpose of the Minnesota Office of Charter Authorizing (MOChA) is to authorize charter schools in Minnesota through the legal instrumentality of chartering as defined in [Minnesota Statutes §124E](#), *supporting and advancing the purposes of charter school law* by serving as a single-purpose authorizer whose mission is to improve *all* pupil learning and *all* student achievement.

As required in Statute, MOChA - a single-purpose authorizer - does not limit applications it solicits, considers, or approved to any single curriculum, learning program or method. Rather, following [NACSA's Principles and Standards](#), considers diverse educational philosophies, approaches, and school models.

The MOChA board is guided by and committed to fulfill the three Core Principles espoused by [NACSA](#):

1. Maintain high standards for schools
2. Uphold school autonomy
3. Protect student and public interests

Consonant with [NACSA's Principles and Standards](#), MOChA implements a comprehensive application process that include:

- Clear application questions and guidance;
- Follows fair, transparent procedures and rigorous criteria; and
- Grants charters only to applicants who demonstrate strong capacity to establish and operate a quality charter school.

MOChA's application:

- States any chartering priorities the authorizer may have established, namely to improve *all* pupil learning and *all* student achievement
- Articulates comprehensive application questions to elicit the information needed for rigorous evaluation of applicants' plans and capacities;
- Requires applicants to demonstrate capacity to serve students with diverse needs, such as students with disabilities or learning exceptionalities and English; and

- Provides clear guidance and requirements regarding application content and format, while explaining evaluation criteria.

MOChA's Change in Authorizer Application process is open, well publicized - through the charter school network and website, and transparent, organized around clear, realistic timelines. The application timeline allows sufficient time for each stage of the application and school pre-opening process to be carried out with quality and integrity and within the requirements of Statute.

Pursuant to [*NACSA's Principles and Standards*](#), the Application:

- Describes how each stage of the application process is conducted and evaluated, including MOChA's chartering priorities, processes, approval criteria, and decisions.
- Informs applicants of their rights and responsibilities and promptly notifies applicants of approval or denial, while explaining the factors that determined the decision.
- Utilizes a multi-stage process in which applicants are provided information at each stage and are permitted to respond to that information during the process.
- Views denied charter applications as an opportunity to provide reasons for denial so that applicants can decide if they wish to revise their plans based in part on that information and resubmit in the future.

Commensurately, MOChA's rigorous approval criteria is aligned to [*NACSA's Principles and Standards*](#):

- Requires all applicants to present a clear and compelling mission, a quality educational program, a solid business plan, effective governance and management structures and systems, founding team members demonstrating diverse and necessary capabilities, and clear evidence of the applicant's capacity to execute its plan successfully.
- Establishes distinct requirements and criteria for applicants proposing to contract with education service or management providers.

Likewise, decision making is multifaceted and rigorous, aligned to [*NACSA's Principles and Standards*](#):

- Grants charters only to applicants that have demonstrated competence and capacity to succeed in all aspects of the school, consistent with the stated approval criteria.
- Rigorously evaluates each application through thorough review of the written proposal, a substantive in-person interview with each qualified applicant, and other due diligence to examine the applicant's experience and capacity, conducted by knowledgeable and competent evaluators.
- Engages, for both written application reviews and applicant interviews, highly competent teams of internal and external evaluators with relevant educational, organizational (governance and management), financial, and legal expertise, as well as thorough understanding of the essential principles of charter school autonomy and accountability.
- Provides orientation or training to application evaluators (including interviewers) to ensure consistent evaluation standards and practices, observance of essential protocols, and unbiased treatment of all applicants.
- Ensures that the application-review process and decision making are free of conflicts of interest, and requires full disclosure of any potential or perceived conflicts of interest between reviewers or decision makers and applicants.
- Approves applications that comprise a detailed plan for school opening, operation, and fiscal stability, with little substantive work left for later development.

Application Process

MOChA considers Charter School Change in Authorizer requests through a formal application process. The Charter School Change in Authorizer Application is reviewed based on statutory requirements and the terms and conditions set forth in the commissioner-approved MOChA Authorizer Approved Plan.

The process for a Change in Authorizer is established in Minnesota Statute §124e.10, Sub. 5.

1. The current authorizer and the school board must jointly submit a written and signed letter of their intent to the Commissioner (MDE) to mutually not renew the contract.
2. Upon request from the proposed authorizer, the current authorizer that is a party to the existing contract must submit to the proposed authorizer all requested information about the fiscal, operational, and student performance status of the school, including unmet contract outcomes and other outstanding contractual obligations.
3. The Charter Contract between the proposed authorizer and the school must identify and provide a plan to address any outstanding obligations from the previous contract.
4. The proposed authorizer must submit the proposed Charter Contract to MDE at least 105 business days before the end of the existing charter contract.

Timeline

The timeline is available at: theMOChA.org and MOChA *Charter School Guide*. MOChA must submit a proposed Charter Contract at least 105 business days before the end of the existing charter contract.

Review and Decision Making Process and Timeline

- Application
 - Charter School Change in Authorizer Application due date is: 1 October; The due date may be revised under extenuating circumstances and in consideration of capacity.
 - Notice of Receipt: MOChA will acknowledge receipt of the application with 2 business days.
 - Site Visit. MOChA will schedule a site visit within 10 days of receipt.
 - Desk Audit. MOChA will review the Change in Authorizer Application to ensure that all required components are included in the materials and that the format requirements are satisfied and will apprise the applicants of any deficiencies within 5 days. MOChA is not obligated to consider applications that have deficiencies. If MOChA requests additional information and/or clarification, the applicants must submit the materials no later than 5 business days after the request is posted.
- Criteria and Evaluation
 - MOChA utilizes an evaluation team comprised of authorizing program staff, independent external evaluators, and at times other MOChA community members deemed appropriate based on their unique skill sets and experiences to conduct a comprehensive review of the documents. Each member of the evaluation team uses the adopted scoring rubric (Exhibit H) to provide feedback and make a recommendation as to whether or not the application merits further consideration and possible approval.



Change in Authorizer (CIA) Application Instructions

Length: The Charter School Change in Authorizer Application should not exceed 15 pages (excluding requested attachments)

Format and layout

Letter: 8.5x11

Font: Calibri, 11

Spacing: 1.5

Margins: 1.0 inch

Pagination: footer must include School Name and page number

File: submit documents (including Budget) in ONE file in portable document format (.pdf)

Submit to: submit@themocha.org.

Notice of Receipt: MOChA will acknowledge receipt of the Charter School Change in Authorizer Application within 2 business days.

Additional information including contact details is available at: theMOChA.org

Preliminary Considerations

If the school is low-performing academically or has audit findings or other identified weaknesses, please clarify how these issues are and/or will be addressed. If the current authorizer and/or MDE has issued notices (of concern, findings, or otherwise), please include information regarding the School's response(s) and any related action(s), e.g., Corrective Action Plans, SIPs, etc. and the progress to date as it/they relate to the following prompts.

An exemplary application will include the following elements:

- I. School Foundation
 - A. School Name
 - B. Current Authorizer
 - C. Mission and Goals
 - D. School History. Please include significant accomplishments.
 - E. School Leader(s)
 - 1. Phone(s):
 - 2. E-mail(s):
 - 3. Resumés (as attachments)
 - F. Enrollment Table

Year	PreK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Prior															
Current															
Year 1 of Contract															
Year 2 of Contract															
Year 3 of Contract															

- II. Learning Program and Student Achievement
 - A. Describe the learning program.
 - B. Describe the academic (proficiency and growth) and non-academic goals and student achievement in reference to the goals.

- III. Operations and Legal Compliance
 - A. Charter Contract. Please attach a copy of the current Charter Contract.
 - a) Authorizer Review. Please attach a copy of the most recent review by the current authorizer.
 - B. Provide a copy of (or hyperlinks to) all board and school policies.
 - C. Describe or attach the Strategic and/or Continuous Improvement Plan.
 - D. Provide a current board roster (in the table, below).

Board Member	Role/Office	Date Seated	Length of Term	Committees

1. Brief profiles of board members, including skills sets, expertises, and experiences relevant to the board responsibilities.

E. Facilities

1. Lease. Please attach a copy of the current lease or a hyperlink to the Affiliate Building Corporation.
2. Describe anticipated facility needs in the next five years.

IV. Fiscals

- A. Audits. Please attach a copy of the two most recent Independent Auditors' Reports.
- B. Budget. Please attach a copy of the current year's budget, including the projected year-end fund balance.

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