



Minnesota Office of Charter Authorizing New Charter School Letter of Intent

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 the chartering priority: 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 New Charter School Letter of Intent 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 new school requests through a formal application process. The Letter of Intent is reviewed based upon statutory requirements and the terms and conditions set forth in the commissioner-approved MOChA Authorizer Approved Plan (AAP).

The process for applying to MOChA to establish a high quality charter school is five step:

- Step 1: New Charter School Letter of Intent
- Step 2: Initial Interview
- Step 3: New Charter School Application (by invitation). The New Charter School Application (including instructions and required components) is available upon request (info@theMOChA.org) and at: theMOChA.org.
- Step 4: Interview
- Step 5: Decision

Timeline

The New Charter School Letter of Intent due date is: 15 November; related timelines are available at: theMOChA.org and *MOChA Charter School Guide*.

The Letter of Intent and Interview are intended as a guide for organizations/individuals interested in submitting an application to MOChA to start a new charter school. The Letter of Intent should not be an initial exploration of ideas but rather a *summary of a thoughtful and cogent plan for how the proposed school will develop and implement a high-quality program for students*. Questions regarding the MOChA Letter of Intent or New Charter School Application process should be directed to: info@theMOChA.org.

Review and Decision Making Process

- Letter of Intent
 - Notice of Receipt. MOChA will acknowledge receipt of the Letter of Intent within 2 business days.
 - MOChA will review the Letter of Intent within 15 business days of receipt.
 - Interview. MOChA will schedule and interview school founders within 30 business days of receipt.
- Criteria and Evaluation
 - An odd number and minimum of three reviewers will receive inter-rater reliability training prior to reviewing applications. Reviewers are selected based on expertise and experience.
 - The New Charter School Letter of Intent Evaluation Rubric is available at: theMOChA.org.
 - Approval is based on these requirements:
 - Overall application consensus rating: 3.0 or above
 - All sections require a consensus rating of 2.0 or above
- Response/Notice
 - MOChA will post a Denial Notice or an Invitation to complete a New Charter School Application within 40 business days of receipt.



Letter of Intent Instructions

Deadline: Please refer to the MOChA website (theMOChA.org) and MOChA *Charter School Guide*

Length: The Letter of Intent should not exceed 6 pages (excluding resumés and matrix)

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 resumés and matrix) in ONE file (.pdf)

Submit to: submit@themocha.org.

Notice of Receipt: MOChA will acknowledge receipt of the Letter of Intent within 2 business days.

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

Please provide the following information:

1. Name of proposed school (if determined):
2. Proposed school location (if determined):
3. Primary contact person:
 - Phone:
 - E-mail:
4. Proposed grade levels to be served:
5. Target demographics:
6. Explain the circumstances and motivations that brought the founding members together to propose this school.
7. Briefly describe the need and demand for the proposed school and provide demonstrable evidence, including community input as well as local district academic performance.
8. Briefly describe the proposed school learning program and how it aligns with the statutory purposes delineated in [Minnesota Statutes Minnesota Statutes §124E](#) and is supported by research.
9. Does the school contract or intend to contract with a charter management organization or company for school management or operation?
10. Describe the proposed governance and leadership structure of the school.

