



## Proposed Authorizing Plan: Part A

### Measure A.1 - Authorizing Mission: The authorizer has a clear and compelling mission for charter school authorizing

#### Mission:

*The Guild advocates for teacher leadership, professional autonomy, and the creation of innovative schools for student engagement and the ownership of learning. The Guild strives to support students, families, and communities most affected by the achievement gap and low graduation rates.*

The Guild’s mission upholds the purpose of charter schools as defined by Minnesota Statute 124E.01. This statute states that the primary purpose of mission-driven charter schools is to “improve the learning, achievement, and success of all students.” The Guild is fully committed to the additional purposes outlined as follows:

1. Increase quality learning opportunities for all students;
2. Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
3. Measure learning outcomes and create different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes;
4. Establish new forms of accountability for schools; and
5. Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site (*this additional purpose is encouraged, but not required.*)

The MN Guild’s portfolio of schools as a collective will continue to memorialize and publish their progress towards meeting these purposes through their annual reports.

#### Vision:

*The Minnesota Guild of Public Charter Schools advances positive educational outcomes for students that lead to success in life.*

As a single-purpose charter school authorizer under [Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.05](#), the Minnesota Guild may not limit its authorizing decisions to any single curriculum, learning program, or method. However, the Guild is committed to developing a portfolio of high-quality, innovative charter schools that support and enhance schools' ability to use teacher-powered and autonomous practices to innovate and improve student success. The organization endeavors to promote model replication or dissemination of high-quality charter school best practices to all Guild schools to assist them with continuous improvement and to help schools meet all statutory purposes through clear communication and support regarding operations, finance, governance, and educational practices.

**Measure A.2 - Authorizer Organizational Goals: The authorizer has clear organizational goals and timeframes for achievement that are aligned with its authorizing mission and Minnesota charter school statute**

The Minnesota Guild embraces the same journey, which is on full display through its diverse portfolio of schools. It is one of Continuous Improvement over time by both inspiring and being inspired by the best that the innovative charter school environment offers. The Guild's current authorizer goals were proposed following the Guild's MAPES evaluation, completed in February of 2022. For a fuller accounting of how these efforts are continuing, please reference the Guild goals timeline [linked here](#). The work of continuous improvement is ongoing and will continue in perpetuity.

To implement the vision noted above, the Guild has committed to and will do the following...

- hold an annual convening around networking and the sharing of best practices
- sponsor an annual PD session around High-Quality Charter school practices
- communicate regularly with all portfolio schools regarding operations, finance, governance, and educational practices to ensure statutory compliance

The establishment of above-referenced organizational goals for the next five years and associated timeframes aligns with and empowers the Guild to realize the statutory purpose of charter schools in Minnesota and its mission of supporting teacher leadership, professional autonomy, and the creation of innovative schools for student engagement and the ownership of learning. Additionally, through its collaboration with the Minnesota Association of Charter School Authorizers (MACSA), the Guild works to implement accountability and professional development opportunities for teachers, including opportunities for teacher-powered initiatives in shaping the learning program at the school level. Finally, these goals and the continuous improvement efforts supported by Minnesota Authorizer Performance Evaluation System (MAPES) help the Guild hold its portfolio of schools accountable for their performance contract ("charter") and statutory purposes.

**Attachments Referenced:**

- [Guild Goals - Timeline & Progress](#)

**Measure A.3 - Authorizer Structure of Operations: The authorizer operates with a clear structure of duties and responsibilities sufficient to effectively oversee its portfolio of charter schools.**

The Minnesota Guild Executive Director directs and supports the continuous development of an exemplary charter school authorizer that promotes and assists best practices of educational excellence and meaningful student achievement. In order to ensure success, the Executive Director works in frequent collaboration with the Guild Professional Staff, the Guild Board of Directors, the Guild Officers, each Guild School, and the Minnesota Department of Education Charter Center. [Please visit the page linked](#) here for additional information, including an organizational chart and core authorizing duties.

**Records Management and Data Security**

The Guild has implemented several systems to manage and protect school and student information, as well as records related to authorizing. This is achieved through the following methods:

Firstly, the Guild has transitioned away from paper copies and utilizes a secure cloud-based system for the storage of all files. The Guild staff has created an electronic folder structure by utilizing Google Workspace to effectively manage authorizing, administrative, and school files. Access to this system is limited to Guild employees and contracted staff on an as-needed basis, and data is continuously backed up. A use guide is linked here for further reference.

Secondly, the Guild developed a document submission portal that utilizes the Google Classroom platform for secure cloud-based document compliance and storage. Google provides SSL/TLS security for all system pages to ensure privacy, authentication, and data integrity. The Guild collects only public data and information via this platform.

All data in Google Workspace is encrypted with multiple security measures, including HTTPS for all transmissions, Perfect Forward Secrecy (PFS), 256-bit Transport Layer Security (TLS) for message transmissions, and 2048 RSA encryption keys. This ensures secure communication for emails with all external parties.

**Attachments Referenced:**

- [Guild Org Chart](#)
- [Guild-Google-Classroom-Submission-Guide](#)
- [Google Workspace Security Whitepaper-2023](#)

**Measure A.4 - Authorizing Staff Expertise: The authorizer has appropriate experience, expertise and skills to sufficiently oversee its portfolio of charter schools.**

The Guild has established a holistic view of the systems needed for schools to achieve quality student performance, stakeholder engagement and satisfaction (students, teachers, families and communities), and effective compliance and monitoring to ensure ongoing improvement and sustainability.

Professional staff will be added to the Guild operations in accordance with the growth of the portfolio outlined by the Board of Directors. Additional advisory consultants and executive board member responsibilities will also be added over time to ensure that the Guild meets its commitment to developing a charter school authorizing model that serves as a national best practice. Current staff, board, and contractors supporting this work can be [referenced here](#).

The Guild has systems in place that safeguard the collaborative work of all involved professionals while preserving the integrity of school data in compliance with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. The Guild utilizes a Google Education Domain for document sharing and a Secure Google Classroom system for document storage. This allows the Guild to monitor and maintain all controls related to permissions and access.

**Attachments Referenced:**

- [Guild Board, Staff & Contractor Resume Folder](#)

**Measure A.5 - Authorizer Knowledge and Skill Development of Authorizing Leadership and Staff: The authorizer has a plan to build the knowledge and skill base of its authorizing leadership and staff through professional development. The authorizer has a plan to provide professional development aligned with its operations, mission and goals for overseeing its portfolio of charter schools.**

The Guild's current staff and board have a breadth of experience in supporting the establishment and operation of charter schools that embody the very best practices in teaching, learning, and student achievement, built on a sustainable base of operating efficiency and community engagement. The Guild will continue to hire and develop staff with expertise in the critical areas of program model, school performance, finance, operations, and governance while contracting with experts in the field as needed.

The following professional development plan is aligned with the Guild's mission: *The Guild advocates for teacher leadership, professional autonomy, and the creation of innovative schools for student engagement and the ownership of learning. The Guild strives to support students, families, and communities most affected by the achievement gap and low graduation rates.*

To ensure the continued skill development of Guild staff, the following iterative approaches will be pursued and strengthened:

1. The qualifications of the Guild Executive Director will be evaluated by the Board through an annual performance review.
2. To ensure that all remain up to date in their knowledge and understanding of authorizing practices, it is expected that all staff (Executive Director, Administrative Assistant, and Project Assistant) will:
  - a. Participate in all required MDE approved trainings related to Charter Schools to remain current on best practices;
  - b. Engage with other top-performing Minnesota authorizers through operational (working level) sessions that align with the Guild's mission to advocate for teacher leadership, professional autonomy, and the establishment of innovative schools that foster student engagement;
  - c. Participate in TeacherPowered Schools training to continue to provide Guild schools with cutting edge information to help promote teacher leadership models in their schools;
  - d. Stay abreast of MDE's definition of High-Quality Charter Schools to continue to promote school and student success;
  - e. Attend monthly meetings of the Minnesota Association of Charter School Authorizers (MACSA); and
  - f. Attend annually a state or national conference geared towards charter school practices.

Through these professional development activities, Guild staff will be well-positioned to achieve its organizational goals for overseeing its portfolio of charter schools:

1. The Guild will offer annual Professional Development to its portfolio of schools to promote networking and sharing of best practices;
2. The Guild will offer regular Technical Assistance sessions to help promote school success; and
3. The Guild will communicate regularly with portfolio schools regarding operations, finance, governance, and educational practices to help ensure schools' statutory compliance.

**Measure A.6 - Authorizer Operational Budget for Authorizing the Portfolio of Charter Schools: The authorizer has a plan to allocate resources commensurate with its stated budget, and the needs and responsibilities of authorizing the portfolio of charter schools**

The Guild's budget is developed annually and reviewed monthly to ensure that the resources allocated to its work are sufficient to accomplish its mission of empowering high-quality charter schools. The categories of Operation, Facilities, and Contract Services are monitored as both the needs of portfolio schools and the Guild's own internal staffing requirements evolve to continually meet those needs. Additionally, the Guild maintains an office in a shared working community space. Industrious North Loop is centrally located in Minneapolis in a facility that affords the Guild access to meeting and conference facilities to host training sessions, professional development events, and portfolio gatherings.

The budget review process and resource allocations provide both continuity and flexibility to allow the Guild to optimally perform its work as an authorizer and adapt to a growing and changing portfolio of schools. As demonstrated by the table above, the budget has more accurately reflected actual expenditures as time has passed, illustrating that the Guild's ability to allocate sufficient resources to each aspect of its work continues to improve. Nothing in how the Guild's funding is structured is vulnerable to conflicts of interest or any other factors that might compromise its judgment as an authorizer. Thus the Guild is in accordance with NACSA's (National Association of Charter School Authorizers) standards on financial resources. Please refer to the linked document for more information on [Guild Finance, Operations, and Project Planning processes](#). To reference an anticipated five-year budget please access the [linked document here](#). To reference the board approved budget for the current fiscal year, please access the [linked document here](#).

The Guild's budgeting and review process embodies and adheres to the principles and standards as posited by NACSA:

*A Quality Authorizer:*

- *Determines the financial needs of the authorizing office and devotes sufficient financial resources to fulfill its authorizing responsibilities in accordance with national standards and commensurate with the scale of the charter school portfolio.*
- *Structures its funding in a manner that avoids conflicts of interest, inducements, incentives, or disincentives that might compromise its judgment in charter approval and accountability decision making.*
- *Deploys funds effectively and efficiently with the public's interests in mind.*

**Attachments Referenced:**

- [Guild Budget Planning & Operations Framework](#)
- [Guild Anticipated 5-year Budget](#)
- [Guild Approved FY25 Budget](#)

**Measure A.7 - Authorizer Operational Conflicts of Interest: The authorizer implements a clear policy to address conflicts of interest in all decision-making processes concerning the portfolio of charter schools.**

The Guild will comply with all conflict of interest expectations set forth in [Minnesota Statute 124E](#). The Guild Policy operates with a broad definition of Conflict of Interest, which extends beyond financial considerations to the appearance of impropriety. Please refer to the Guild's approved [Conflict of Interest Policy here](#) for more detail or to review the comprehensive mitigation process that is followed for all real and perceived conflicts. The areas where conflict is reviewed regularly by the Guild are as follows:

- **STAFF:** To ensure that no conflict of interest exists within the process of school oversight, all Guild staff are required to sign an employee contract that states: *"During the term of the Employee's active employment with the Employer, the Employee will not, directly or indirectly, engage or participate in any other business activities that the Employer, in its reasonable discretion, determines to be in conflict with the best interests of the Employer without the written consent of the Employer, which consent will not be unreasonably withheld."*
- **PORTFOLIO SCHOOLS:** The Guild works with all its schools to ensure that a conflict of interest policy is with an annual review process in place. In the Guild's "Ready to Open" checklist, Governance & Management(17) *"Establish board policy for conflict of interest; have board members sign a conflict of interest form annually."*

- MN GUILD BOARD: Finally, charter school board members are asked annually to sign a statement of assurance that no conflicts of interest exist, with a best practice of COI statement/exploration at the opening of all monthly board meetings.

**Please Note:** The Guild’s COI policy applies to all staff, board members, and contracted support. In addition, to further ensure that contracted evaluators have no conflicts of interest that could influence important decisions regarding new charter school applications or the renewal of existing charter school contracts, the Guild requires all reviewers of any new, transfer, and/or renewal school applications to sign a conflict of interest statement. Furthermore, Guild evaluators are prohibited from seeking employment from Guild-authorized schools as outlined in their signed contractor agreement.

**Attachments Referenced:**

- [Guild Board & MDE Approved Conflict of Interest Policy](#)

**Measure A.8 - Ensuring Autonomy of the Schools in the Portfolio: The authorizer implements a policy to preserve and support the essential autonomies of the portfolio of charter schools.**

The Guild’s mission and vision, as stated previously, are dedicated to autonomy within the field of education and student development. For a complete overview of the Minnesota Guild’s practical support, please refer to the Guild’s full autonomy policy [linked here](#). Furthermore, the Guild is committed to growing a portfolio of high-quality, innovative charter schools that promote, establish, and expand teacher-powered models and autonomies. The teacher-powered model, as designed by [Education Evolving](#), includes 15 areas that provide educators autonomy to make decisions impacting school and student success. These areas of autonomy include charter school board governance, making all decisions about the school’s learning program, choosing the process and methods for teacher evaluation, and managing the allocation of the school’s financial resources. Charter schools may implement one or many areas of autonomy to be considered a teacher-powered school.

Finally, the Guild seeks to promote and is especially interested in authorizing new charter schools that address the additional statutory purpose ([Minnesota Statutes 124E.01, subdivision 1\(5\)](#)), “create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.” Finally, the Guild’s new charter school application is aligned with the priorities, criteria, and requirements of Minnesota’s Federal Charter Schools Program (CSP) grant project.



**Attachments Referenced:**

- [Guild Policy on School Autonomy](#)
- [Teacher-Powered Autonomies - Education Evolving](#)

**Measure A.9 - Authorizer Self-Evaluation of Capacity, Infrastructure and Practices: The authorizer plans to self evaluate its internal ability (capacity, infrastructure and practices) to oversee the portfolio of charter schools.**

The Guild regularly evaluates its internal ability to oversee its portfolio of charter schools. The Guild Board is made up of a highly experienced volunteer board which empowers an Executive Director and Administrative Assistant to support increased needs with the employment of consultants and educational experts as needed.

The Guild's internal evaluation process includes:

1. Annual staff performance evaluation
2. Annual review of staff levels to ensure school portfolio ratio procedure and process
3. Annual school leader surveys
4. Interface with other authorizers and organizations committed to charter school development and performance
5. Teachers giving feedback to their school administrators (for our review) input about how they think their school is doing, *"nothing about us without us"*

This process is carried out through a quarterly planning cycle guided by the principles of continuous improvement and accountability. Key project timelines and schedules devised of how best to support schools continuously and over time. The foundation of this support process is anchored by the Guild's Board of Directors who utilize their extensive experience to review schools, staff, finances, and organizational goals. Mirroring its support for schools, the board has an Executive Committee and a Finance Committee responsible for the review of the authorizer's finances, priorities, and strategic planning. This layered and intentional approach allows for the building of capacity, infrastructure, and practices to oversee its portfolio of charter schools. Finally, the Guild convenes an annual board retreat to both evaluate the past year's performance, and to set new goals when applicable via a strategic planning process utilizing [SMART Goals](#).

**Attachments Referenced:**

- [MDE - Setting up Useful \(SMART\) Goals](#)

**Measure A.10 - Authorizer High Quality Authorizing Dissemination: The authorizer plans to disseminate best authorizing practices and/or assist other authorizers in high quality authorizing.**

The Guild is fully committed to a systemic approach to charter school formation and operation that promotes stakeholder accountability, autonomy, and competence. Furthermore, The Guild advocates for teacher leadership, professional autonomy, and the creation of innovative schools for student engagement and the ownership of learning. The Guild strives to support students, families, and communities most affected by the achievement gap and low graduation rates. This extends to working with fellow authorizers to have a broader impact for the benefit of students across Minnesota and the Nation. The Guild focuses on continuous improvement both internally and externally in the following ways:

1. The Guild staff and board participate in applicable workshops offered or sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Education. In these settings, the Guild is fully committed to working with participants to design and implement best practices for authorizing charter schools.
2. Through its commitment to and work with the Minnesota Association of Charter School Authorizers (MACSA), the Guild works with fellow authorizers to advance charter school performance through collaborative design and implementation of best practices. To this end, the Guild Executive Director has served as the Vice Chair of MACSA for the past two terms. Additionally, Guild staff and education specialists have worked directly with fellow authorizers Innovative Quality Schools (IQS), Osprey Wilds, and Novation Education Organization (NEO) on policy, process, and training development.
3. The Guild is constantly working to make its website (<https://www.guildschools.org/>) more supportive by providing resources for its portfolio of schools and other authorizers. This platform provides opportunities to view the Guild's portfolio of schools and learn directly about increased learning opportunities for students, the use of different and innovative teaching methods, innovative ways to measure learning outcomes, new forms of accountability for schools, and new professional opportunities for teachers.

**Attachments Referenced:**

- [Guild New Charter School Application](#)

**Measure A.11 - Authorizer Compliance to Responsibilities Stated in Statute: The authorizer intends to comply with reporting, submissions and deadlines set forth in Minnesota Statutes.**

As outlined previously, the Guild Board empowers its Executive Director and staff to organize and oversee all operations and reporting requirements of authorizers documented in [Minnesota Statute 124E.05](#). These responsibilities are contained within the contracted descriptions between the Guild Board, Executive Director, and relevant staff. Finally, the Guild Board contracts with a licensed CPA firm that supports the management of organizational financial data in order to meet all requirements of the MDE, State of Minnesota and the IRS in the submission of its 501(c)3 financial information.

In order to remain compliant, the Guild carefully adheres to the instructions and guidance provided by MDE Charter Center staff. To this end, the Guild staff utilizes a shared electronic calendar to keep track of all statutory compliance, reporting and submission due dates. All deadlines are reviewed by the whole staff during quarterly planning sessions and weekly one-on-one staff check-ins to ensure that all team members are aware of approaching requirements and that they are completed on time.

