



## Proposed Authorizing Plan: Part B

**Measure B.1 - New Charter School Decisions:** The authorizer has clear and comprehensive approval criteria and process standards to rigorously evaluate new charter school proposals. The authorizer outlines new charter school decision-making standards and processes that will promote the growth of high-quality charter schools.

The Minnesota Guild (the Guild) seeks applications on an annual basis from developing teams who are interested in starting a new high-quality charter school in Minnesota. This new charter school application is based on *Application Process & Decision Making standards* of the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) and *Charter Application Process & Decision Making standards* of the Minnesota Association of Charter School Authorizers' (MACSA). The Guild only pursues the founding of schools that aim to meet the updated primary purpose of mission-driven charter schools “to improve the learning, achievement and success of all students” as required by [Minnesota Statute 124E.01](#).

The Guild’s new charter school application requirements are aligned with the Minnesota Department of Education’s (MDE) most recent New Charter School Affidavit Instructions, and Guidance for Authorizers on New Charter School Application Requirements, and are aligned with the MDE’s Charter Schools Program (CSP) Start-Up Grant Opportunity. For more information, the Guild’s New Charter School Application, which addresses these requirements and corresponding instructions, is [referenced here](#).

The applicant will require a diverse set of expertise and experience to launch a new school. Charter school applicants and operators must comply with all relevant requirements in [Minnesota Statutes 124E](#) which govern charter school formation and operation. To that end, all applicants must describe how they will address the statutory purposes of charter schools and achieve the school’s mission, goals, program and student performance. Additionally, applicants must describe plans for governance, administration, operations and financial management and evaluation of educational effectiveness, and organizational and fiscal plans.

### **Teacher-Powered Schools:**

As a single-purpose charter school authorizer under [Minnesota Statutes 124E.05](#), the Guild may not limit its authorizing decisions to any single curriculum, learning program, or method. The Guild is committed to growing a portfolio of high-quality, innovative charter schools that promote,

establish, and expand teacher-powered models and autonomies which encompasses a variety of school and educational models. The New School application process is designed to help applicants assess their readiness and capacity to operate a successful charter school.

### **High-Quality Charter Schools:**

The comprehensive requirements of the Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota Guild are designed to ensure that applicants build a proper foundation to optimize success in creating a High-Quality, High-Performing school for all stakeholders. The Guild's New Charter School application encourages developers to design systems and infrastructure to meet the U.S. Department of Education's definition of high-quality charter schools (HQCS) as reflected in the MDE's 2024 High-Quality Charter School Comprehensive Performance Framework.

#### **High-quality charter school**

The term "high-quality charter school" means a charter school that-

- a. shows evidence of strong academic results, which may include strong student academic growth as determined by a State;
- b. has no significant issues in the areas of student safety, financial and operational management, or statutory or regulatory compliance;
- c. has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement, including graduation rates where applicable, for all students served by the charter school; and
- d. has demonstrated success in increasing student academic achievement, including graduation rates where applicable, for each of the subgroups of students, as defined in section 6311(c)(2) of this title, except that such demonstration is not required in a case in which the number of students in a group is insufficient to yield statistically reliable information or the results would reveal personally identifiable information about an individual student.

#### **Attachments Referenced:**

- [New Charter School Application](#)
- [24.02-28 High-Quality Charter Performance Framework](#)

**Measure B.2 - Interim Accountability Decisions (i.e., site/grade level/early learning expansions, ready to open, and change in authorizer):** The authorizer has clear and comprehensive approval criteria and process standards to rigorously evaluate school opening decisions as well as proposals of existing charter school expansion requests and other interim changes. The authorizer outlines interim accountability decision-making standards and processes that will promote the growth of high-quality charter schools.

**Charter School Expansion:**

The Minnesota Guild (Guild) encourages charter schools that have demonstrated success in providing all students with a high-quality education, ensuring efficient use of public resources, and meeting compliance requirements to expand their impact on students. A charter school expansion goes beyond approved plans in a school's current charter contract by implementing grade level, site, and/or early learning program expansions, should such an expansion meet community need and demand and align with the strategic plan of the school. The Guild reserves the right to reject an application for grade level, site, or early learning program expansions should the evaluation process determine that the school's performance does not warrant such expansion or that the expansion plans do not demonstrate a high probability of success. Site visit expansions must fulfill [MN Statutes 124E.02 \(h\) "Market need and demand study."](#) Please reference the Guild's [Expansion Application linked here](#) for complete information.

**Change in Authorizer Request:**

Schools that wish to transfer from their current authorizer to the Guild will submit a change in authorizer application to the Guild by September 1st of their renewal year. The Minnesota Guild (Guild) encourages charter schools in search of a new authorizer to submit a change in authorizer application for potential inclusion in the Guild's portfolio of schools. This change in authorizer process and application is based on [Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.10, subdivision 5](#). For more information please reference the [Change in Authorizer Application linked here](#).

**Ready-to-Open Determinations:**

After the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) approves new school applicants, the Guild will monitor school start-up progress through monthly evaluations, which address deliverables, timing, and accountability. The Guild's comprehensive Ready to Open Checklist, [linked here](#), ensures that all essential components are identified, communicated, and implemented in an orderly fashion.

**Attachments Referenced:**

- [MN Guild Expansion Process](#)
- [MN Guild Change in Authorizer Form](#)
- [Ready to Open Checklist](#)

**Measure B.3 - Contract Term, Negotiation and Execution: The authorizer executes contracts that clearly define material terms and rights and responsibilities of the school and the authorizer.**

The MN Guild leverages a comprehensive charter contract that identifies the material terms, rights, and responsibilities of both parties: the school and the authorizer. The contract is updated regularly via feedback from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) charter school staff, other authorizers with model contracts, and NACSA's "[Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing](#)." The MN Guild contract explicitly states expectations of the school and the MN Guild during the contract term. In addition, all Guild contracts meet statutory requirements [Minnesota Statute 124E.10](#) outlines the format and content of a contract between an authorizer and a charter school. By statute, the contract must contain required elements that define the relationship and performance expectations of both parties. All contracts between the Guild and its portfolio of schools contain the required elements identified in law. Each school contract will differ in terms pertaining to student performance expectations, as the school models and the student populations will vary by age and level.

The MN Guild references each school's contract: (1) throughout the term of the school's contract term as a reference during technical assistance or when the Guild is in an intervention process with a school; and (2) for the purpose of contract renewal. As stated in the [NACSA Principles and Standards](#), "A quality authorizer defines and communicates to schools the process, methods, and timing of gathering and reporting school performance and compliance data." During change in authorizer and contract renewal, the MN Guild provides time for schools to review guidance before execution. Renewal and change in authorizer contracts are executed by July 1st, which is the first day of all renewal and transfer contracts.

**Attachments Referenced:**

- [Guild Contract Template](#)
- [Guild Renewal Process Overview](#) (Goal Table pg.11)

**Measure B.4 - Performance Outcomes and Standards: The authorizer has a performance framework under which it executes contracts with clear, measurable and attainable performance outcomes and standards. The authorizer has established processes designed to hold charter schools in its portfolio accountable to its academic, financial and operational performance outcomes and standards.**

As referenced above, the MN Guild [contract template](#) produces contracts with clear, measurable, and attainable performance outcomes and standards/goals. The current Guild contract template is a result of best practice sharing among other Minnesota authorizers, Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) feedback, alignment with the oversight and evaluation criteria required in Minnesota Statute 124.E and as defined by NACSA's "[Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing](#)." Throughout this process, the MN Guild focuses on contract goals that are SMART: specific and strategic, measurable, attainable, results-based, and time-bound, which will help strengthen and maintain high-quality charter schools.

The academic performance measures used by the MN Guild are fully disclosed in each contract under [Section 6.8 Performance Requirements](#). With the inherent flexibility in negotiating performance outcomes, the Guild offers guidance and resources for developing high-quality goals and benchmarks which lead to outcomes that carefully align a school's mission and vision to goals that meet statutory requirements, [Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness](#) (CACR) goals, and school-specific measures that will move them toward successful performance. Performance measures are written for the duration of a contract, including annual benchmarks/indicators of success. Annual analysis assists with accountability; the Guild reviews the schools' progress to determine whether interventions need to be implemented due to a school not making sufficient progress toward achieving contract goals.

In addition to strong performance measures, fiscal, governance and operational measures are also key elements of high-quality charter schools. The Guild has expectations and accountability requirements that serve these goals. To learn more about how the Guild monitors fidelity to these elements, communicates, and holds schools accountable, please review the plan [linked here](#).

#### **Academic Performance:**

The performance requirements section of each school's charter contract specifies academic goals, performance targets, and dates by which the school is expected to meet performance targets over the contract term. Guild schools serve unique and diverse student populations not adequately measured by a universal academic performance framework. Schools receive annual/formative feedback on their contractual goals annually when the Guild evaluates schools' annual reports. Data collected through this annual evaluative process is tabulated over the contract term and serves as primary performance data when the school is evaluated for contract renewal. Please see [Section 6.8 Performance Requirements](#) of each school's contract for its academic performance framework.

#### **Governance, Operations, and Financial Performance:**

The Guild has developed a universal set of governance, operational and financial performance standards, and compliance indicators in its performance framework, which is [linked here](#). Data is collected from schools on an ongoing basis through Google Classroom submissions and key monitoring activities. Desk reviews, website compliance, board meeting observations, site visits, annual report reviews, and financial reviews are used throughout the contract term to assess and evaluate each school's compliance and organizational performance.

#### **Attachments Referenced:**

- [Guild Contract Template](#)
- [MN Guild Monitoring and Oversight Plan](#)
- [Standards & Indicators Framework](#)

**Measure B.5 - Authorizer's Processes for Ongoing Oversight of the Portfolio of Charter Schools: The authorizer has processes to monitor and oversee charter schools in the areas of academics, operations and finances.**

After a school has met the rigorous requirements for authorization, the Guild initiates an ongoing system of oversight for all operational schools to monitor and review the accountabilities the school must fulfill to meet its performance goals and commitments. These accountabilities are defined by statute and in the contract the school signed with the Guild and can be referenced further in the monitoring and oversight plan [linked here](#). Significant annual oversight practices and procedures can be referenced in further detail as follows:

As mentioned previously, the Guild employs a universal set of governance, operational, and financial performance standards and compliance indicators in its performance framework linked here. Data is collected from schools on an ongoing basis through Google Classroom submissions and key monitoring activities. Desk reviews, website compliance, board meeting observations, site visits, annual report reviews, and financial reviews are used throughout the contract term to assess and evaluate each school's compliance and organizational performance. Please reference the [Annual Reporting Instruction Guide](#) as well as the [Review Rubric & Template](#) for greater detail.

All required academic, financial, operational, and legal reporting to the Guild is managed through a cloud-based system. The system provides secure, functional two-way portal access between the school and the authorizer using a Google Workplace/Classroom platform. This allows for real-time monitoring and reporting of each charter school's academics, operations, and finances. For more information, please refer to the data and reporting requirements for all schools [linked here](#).

**Attachments Referenced:**

- [MN Guild Monitoring and Oversight Plan](#)
- [Standards & Indicators Framework](#)
- [Annual Reporting Instruction Guide](#)
- [Review Rubric & Template](#)
- [Guild Data & Reporting-Required Submissions](#)

**Measure B.6 - Authorizer's Standards and Processes for Interventions, Corrective Action and Response to Complaints: The authorizer has clear and comprehensive standards and processes to address complaints, intervention and corrective action.**

**Complaint Process:**

The Guild strives to address complaints regarding the corporation (i.e. The Guild) and/or its authorized schools. The Guild takes all complaints seriously and reviews allegations of illegality or failure to meet contract standards for its portfolio. These complaints are in turn, considered collaboratively against the risk of infringement upon each district's autonomy. Complaints generally fall into two categories: 1. Student/Parent Conflict with School 2. Alleged violation of Minnesota Statute. In response to a complaint, the Guild may conduct additional oversight activities, such as a focused site visit, if necessary.

#### **Interventions and Corrective Action:**

The Minnesota Guild has established clear standards, procedures, and processes for addressing and resolving complaints. More detailed information concerning the complaint and resolution processes can be [referenced here](#). The Guild's guidelines for implementing interventions and corrective actions can be found in *Section 6.9 Performance Requirements* of the charter contract template under "*Remediation*" (p. 9). If ongoing oversight and evaluation indicate the need, a school may be placed on formal intervention or corrective action as outlined in the charter contract.

#### **Attachments Referenced:**

- [Guild Contract Template](#)
- [MN Guild Complaint Policy and Process](#)

**Measure B.7 - Charter School Support, Development and Technical Assistance:** The authorizer has a plan to support its portfolio of charter schools through intentional assistance and development offerings.

The MN Guild will offer intentional support and assistance to improve school operations and student learning outcomes.

Learning and Development assistance is offered in the following areas to all portfolio schools:

- Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB)
- MDE High-Quality Charter School Competitive Grant Process
- Minnesota Legislative and Statutory Updates
- Charter school Annual and Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness Reports (*formerly World's Best Workforce*).
- Board training and the statutory requirements concerning board training
- Technical assistance for schools in contract renewal

Learning and Development assistance is offered in the following areas to approved schools seeking to open:

- The contracting process
- MN Guild Ready-to-Open Process
- MDE new charter school requirements
- Charter School Programs (CSP) Grant
- Other resources
- Next steps for the newly approved schools

The Guild offers regular scheduled in person and Zoom sessions that all schools are encouraged to attend. These began as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic to allow schools to confer and share strategies at a time of great uncertainty, and to enable the Guild to relay important news and information. The focus of these sessions has shifted to more general matters, and have become an opportunity for the Guild to offer ongoing support and for schools to network and share ideas on a wide variety of topics and to share technical assistance that applies to all schools.

**Measure B.8 – High-Quality Charter School Replication and Dissemination of Best School Practices: The authorizer has a plan to promote model replication and dissemination of best practices of high-quality charter schools.**

## Dissemination

The Guild embraces the “it takes a village” approach towards the replication of high-quality charter schools and the dissemination of best practices. The Guild encourages the sharing of information both within and without its network to replicate and expand high-quality charter schools and share best practices between charter schools and other public schools. The main goal being to improve both the learning and life outcomes for Minnesota students. As an authorizer, the Guild disseminates authorizing resources during conferences and PD sessions, through our website, and upon request. [Minnesota Statute 124E.17 subdivision 1\(b\)](#) states in part, “...Authorizers, operators, and the department also may disseminate information about the successful best practices in teaching and learning demonstrated by charter schools.” While the language in the law suggests that disseminating best practices is optional, the Guild is committed to providing opportunities for other charter schools and/or interested parties to learn about successful school innovations. To these ends, the Guild observes the following recommended channels of dissemination from the [National Charter School Resource Center](#) for the sharing of best practices:

Key Activities	Purpose	Timeline
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Summer Convening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-person or virtual dissemination event which showcases the work of other portfolio charter schools</li> </ul>	<b>Implemented Annually</b>
Webinars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Portfolio webinars and in-person sessions to give deeper context and advice on best practices</li> <li>Peer-to-Peer meetings between school leaders and practitioners to share vetted practices based on similar challenges</li> </ul>	<b>Quarterly</b>
Resource Dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Video resources to be housed on the Guild website which demonstrate and explain best practice</li> <li>Newsletters, and MDE resources are also listed on the Guild Website</li> </ul>	<b>Rolling Basis</b>
Mentor Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New school leaders and board chairs are matched with an experienced mentor from similar school/background</li> </ul>	<b>As Needed</b>

## Replication

The Guild currently serves and promotes schools providing students with the following instructional innovations:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher Powered</li> <li>Experiential learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project-based learning</li> <li>Cultural immersion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Place-based education</li> <li>Arts and Science Integration</li> </ul>
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For schools identified as meeting the following “High-Quality ” criteria through the annual review process, the Guild will set in motion conversations about the potential (not requirement) to apply for a replication or expansion grant. The term “high-quality charter school” is defined by the [U.S. Department of Education \(20 USC 7221i\)](#) as follows:

- Shows evidence of strong academic results, which may include strong student academic growth, as determined by the MDE;
- Has no significant issues in the areas of student safety, financial and operational management, or statutory or regulatory compliance;
- Has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement, including graduation rates where applicable, for all students served by the charter school;

4. Has demonstrated success in increasing student academic achievement, including graduation rates where applicable, for each of the subgroups of students, as defined in section 1111(c)(2), except that such demonstration is not required in a case in which the number of students in a group is insufficient to yield statistically reliable information or the results would reveal personally identifiable information about an individual student.

Key Steps	Purpose	Timeline
Peer to Peer Conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Step 1: Guild Executive Director will gauge the school’s interest level in pursuing MDE defined HQCS status and CSP grant.</li> </ul>	Implemented Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Step 2: If the school is receptive to replication/expansion, the Guild Board meets with the School Board to discuss supporting a school-wide effort/application.</li> </ul>	Quarterly
Support Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resources to be housed on the Guild website that demonstrate and explain replication</li> <li>Newsletters and MDE resources are also listed on the Guild Website</li> </ul>	Rolling Basis

**Attachments Referenced:**

- [MN Guild Monitoring and Oversight Plan](#)



**Measure B.9 - Charter School Renewal or Termination Decisions: The authorizer has clear and comprehensive standards and processes to make high stakes renewal and termination decisions. The authorizer outlines charter school renewal and termination decision standards and processes that will promote the growth of high-quality charter schools.**

**Charter Renewal:**

The Guild’s updated [renewal process](#) outlines transparent and rigorous standards, procedures, timelines and review processes designed to use comprehensive academic, financial, operational and student performance data to make high stakes merit-based renewal decisions and terminate charters when necessary to protect student and public interests, consistent with Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.10, subdivisions 1(a)(7), 1(a)(8), 1(a)(13), 1(a)(14), 1(c) and subdivision 3(a). Minnesota statute provides that the renewal and termination criteria and process be “based on evidence that demonstrates the academic, organizational, and financial competency of the school, including its success in increasing student achievement and meeting

the goals of the charter school agreement.” The Guild is dedicated to authorizing schools that are both high-performing and sustainable. To that end, the Guild seeks to help schools demonstrate and document performance that enables successful renewal of charter authorizations.

The Guild will conduct a summative evaluation of a school during the final year of its contract. This initiative is a continuation of the formative oversight and evaluation process used by the Guild throughout the life of the contract. It incorporates data gathered by the Guild, provided by the school, and from external sources to provide a holistic view of the school’s performance. The evaluation will examine whether the school has fulfilled its contract requirements to improve student achievement, achieved financial stability, and worked successfully with the Guild to progress on [performance standards and compliance indicators](#).

Per [Minn. Stat. § 124E.10 Sub 3\(a\)](#), *“The authorizer shall provide a formal written evaluation of the school's performance before the authorizer renews the charter contract. The commissioner must review and comment on the authorizer's evaluation process at the time the authorizer submits its application for approval and each time the authorizer undergoes its five-year review under section 124E.05, subdivision 5.”*

Per [Minn. Stat. §124E.01](#) and the charter contract, the most important factor to be considered with charter renewal is the primary purpose of mission-driven charter schools: *to improve the learning, achievement and success of all students*, e.g., is the school is meeting its academic pupil performance outcomes/goals from the charter contract?

### **Rating Scale, Weights, and Contract Term Decisions**

The Guild’s updated renewal process incorporates a five-level scoring and rating scale that is based on the percentage of standards and indicators achieved. The five-level scale reflects a more transparent set of ratings intended to allow schools to more accurately gauge ongoing and summative progress on goal targets, standards, and indicators:

- Exceeded = 81-100%
- Met = 61-80%
- Approaching = 41-60%
- Emerging = 21-40%
- Not Met = 0-20%

Given the Guild’s diverse and unique school portfolio (e.g., small high schools that serve students who’ve been unsuccessful elsewhere and historically underperform on traditional measures of achievement and growth), this five-level scale is more realistic and designed to incentivize schools to perform at higher levels.

### **Renewal Terms**

- Renewal contracts may be for up to five years ([per Minn. Stat. § 124E.10.1.](#))
- Schools receiving an overall rating of “Exceeded” or “Met” will be eligible for a five-year renewal contract.
- Schools receiving an overall rating of “Approaching” will be eligible for a three-year renewal contract with a PIP.
- Schools receiving an overall rating of “Emerging” or “Not Met” are ineligible for contract renewal, and the school’s charter contract will end on June 30th of the last contract year.

Each contract renewal process includes the following key activities:

1. Review of School’s Past Performance
2. On-Site Meetings & Observations
3. Renewal Performance Evaluation Report & Renewal Decision Issued
4. Renewal Contract Negotiated
5. Renewal Contract Finalized

Complete information can be referenced in the Guild’s [Renewal Process Overview linked here.](#)

### **School Closure Plans:**

The closing of a school has a significant impact on its stakeholders and, therefore, must be managed with the utmost care. In the event of a school closing due to charter contract non-renewal or termination, the Guild will ensure that a plan is thoroughly mapped and executed to facilitate the transition of students and families. A school closing may be precipitated by a number of factors, including low academic performance, the inability to meet enrollment expectations, facility issues, leadership or staffing challenges involving the board of directors and/or staff, financial challenges, or other termination for cause. The Guild’s active monitoring and oversight of a school are designed to help a school identify and resolve many challenges, but in some cases, the situation may be untenable, and closure is the appropriate solution.

As an engaged overseer, the Guild will act decisively when closure is called for and monitor the plan development and execution, working closely with the affected stakeholders. The National Association of Charter School Authorizers has developed a [Charter School Closure Guide](#) that can be adapted for any school closure situation. The Guild School Closure Plan [referenced here](#) integrates NACSA’s guidance, which meets the provisions of [Minnesota Statute 124E.10.1.\(b\)](#) and outlines the process for the closing of an underperforming school, “the charter contract must contain the plan for an orderly closing of the school under chapter [317A](#), that establishes the responsibilities of the school board of directors and the authorizer, whether the closure is a termination for cause, a voluntary termination, or a nonrenewal of the contract.”

In the event of a school closure, the Guild will immediately engage the Minnesota Department of Education and legal counsel to notify them of the closure, keep them informed about plans and progress, and leverage their expertise. The Guild will identify accountability for each task and assign the timeline for execution. The Guild will partner with the school's leadership, but also assume responsibility for oversight of the closure. Non-renewal and contract termination will occur if a school violates its contract in the following ways:

1. Failure to meet the accountability requirements agreed to in the contract to achieve high pupil performance and the actual student results contained in the contract;
2. Failure to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management;
3. Violations of law and/or
4. Other demonstrated good cause.

**Attachments Referenced:**

- [Guild Renewal Process Overview](#)
- [Guild School Closure Plan](#)
- [NACSA School Closure Guide](#)
- [Standards & Indicators Framework](#)



MINNESOTA GUILD