

**Volunteers of America of Minnesota
Charter School Sponsorship
Program Guide**



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About Volunteers of America of Minnesota

Volunteers of America was established in Minnesota in 1896, making us one of the oldest non-profits in the state. Throughout our history, we have responded to some of the most pressing societal needs. **The mission of Volunteers of America of Minnesota (VOA of MN) is to enrich the lives of our program participants and to make a significant difference in the communities in which we serve.** We seek to empower program participants with the skills, education, and competencies necessary for age-appropriate independence and self-reliance. We seek to strengthen communities and foster within them the capacity to support their members in achieving this independence and self-reliance.

We pursue this mission through five program areas:

- **Family and Children's Services-** A wide array of programs, including residential treatment, in-home assistance to families caring for children with a variety of disabilities, and two mental health centers;
- **Housing-** Community-based residencies for adults with developmental disabilities or mental illness;
- **Education -** Two contract alternative schools and a night school for Somali immigrants in Minneapolis as well as the charter school sponsorship program;
- **Correctional -**A variety of facilities, including the most secure community-based juvenile correctional facility in Minnesota and a multi-approach treatment program for women leaving a life of prostitution; and
- **Senior Services-** The largest, most diverse array of community-based services for senior citizens in Minnesota.

Because of the wide range of our services, we are able to respond to an equally wide range of human needs. Annually, our more than 34,000 program participants include abused and neglected children, children with mental health problems, persons with developmental disabilities or mental illness, students at risk of educational failure, persons convicted of crime but now motivated to develop self-sufficient lives, independent senior citizens seeking social activities and home-bound seniors requiring significant services and supports to remain in their residence of choice.

VOA of MN is staffed by over 700 (279 Full time/ 436 Part time) well-trained and dedicated professionals. Their work is supported by approximately 4,500 volunteers who provide service in our own social service programs and in a variety of other community volunteer activities. Our 25-member board of directors is comprised of local professionals and civic leaders with vast expertise and experience who are committed to supporting our mission. Read more about our organization at <http://www.voamn.org>.

Why Volunteers of America of Minnesota Sponsors Charter Schools

Charter schools offer teachers, parents and community members the opportunity to create new public schools in response to community needs. In return, these chartered schools agree to be held accountable by their sponsor for student performance outcomes. If the charter school fails to produce the promised student outcomes the sponsor may intervene in a variety of ways, and as a last resort can close the school. Quality charter school sponsorship is the linchpin of the charter promise of accountability for results and the creation of quality educational opportunities. While charter sponsors are not responsible for the ultimate success or failure of a charter school, they can have a major impact on that outcome by providing strong oversight and accountability.

In 2000 the Minnesota state legislature made it possible for non-profit organizations with a \$2,000,000 fund balance and membership in the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits to sponsor charter schools. At this time, Volunteers of America of Minnesota became the first non-profit charter school sponsor in the nation. VOA of became a sponsor because we recognized it as a new and effective way of carrying out our mission. This decision was the result of a number of factors. Through our experience as an operator of two contracted alternative schools in the Minneapolis Public Schools we witnessed the significant positive impact that small, personalized learning environments can have on students and their families. The opportunity to assist teachers, parents and community members to create and sustain small schools in their communities was a natural extension of our positive experience with our alternative schools. Thus, we had both the vision and experience to assume this role.

In the years that we have been sponsoring, VOA OF MN has developed and practices a model of charter school sponsorship that goes beyond the compliance-based role vaguely outlined in state statute. We engage in pro-active relationships and add value to the schools with which we work. During the start-up phase VOA OF MN works closely with founding groups to ensure that tasks necessary to a successful opening (facility, finance, human resources, marketing/recruitment, curriculum development) are accomplished in a timely manner. Once operational, VOA OF MN vigilantly monitors the financial and academic performance of its schools through frequent communication and site visits and regular review of financial and program documents. When signs of trouble arise, we work closely with the school's board to problem solve and identify resources that may be helpful. This is a departure from the traditional reactive relationship between charter school sponsors and schools.

VOA OF MN has much to offer charter schools in the way of expertise in non-profit management and board governance. Our track record of responding to emerging community needs with effective social service programs and experience starting and operating two alternative schools makes our organization particularly qualified to sponsor charter schools. We recognize the great challenges and difficulties in starting a charter school and can help school developers navigate this complex process while respecting the autonomy and uniqueness of each school. In order to cover the costs of the program, VOA of MN charges the sponsorship fee allowed in state law (\$30 per student during the first three years of operation, \$10 per student thereafter) and requests that schools budget a sponsorship fee into their federal grant application for oversight and technical assistance during the start-up period (negotiated on a school-by-school basis).

The Volunteers of America of Minnesota Charter School Hallmarks

VOA of MN has determined a set of design characteristics, or hallmarks, that charter school applications must possess in order for VOA of MN to consider sponsorship. These hallmarks ensure that we only work with top-quality charter schools whose mission and purpose are in alignment with our organization and help us achieve the goal of creating a cooperating network of schools with enough in common to form meaningful relationships. The hallmarks are:

Small schools- Research shows that students are more successful in small school environments. Students receive more attention and are able to form strong relationships with their teachers in small schools. Their size allows teachers to work closely with parents and students to develop individualized learning plans that address the learning style of the student, resulting in a more beneficial learning experience for all involved.

A focus on marginalized students- VOA of MN is committed to working with children and families in need. Currently, many students are not served well by the traditional public school system. Some of these students fit the traditional “at-risk” profile, but many others have been pushed to the margins for reasons such as unique learning styles, lack of social skills and nonconformity. VOA of MN assists in the creation of schools that will help all students succeed.

A focus on service learning- Service learning is an educational strategy where students gain and apply academic knowledge and critical thinking skills to address genuine community needs. It is a powerful and authentic method of learning that gives students opportunities to reflect on their place in the world. As our name suggests, VOA of MN believes that all persons are assets for their community, and seek to extend to all youth the opportunity to contribute as a volunteer and community-creator.

Schools that fill a void in the community- VOA of MN is committed to assisting in the development of educational opportunities that do not currently exist in the community. In addition to being innovative, schools seeking VOA of MN sponsorship should have curriculum design that is research-based, supported by best practices and aligned with the Minnesota Graduation Standards.

A commitment to racial, ethnic and socio-economic diversity- To counter the trend toward increasing segregation in our schools and our society, VOA of MN strongly believes in the importance of diverse learning environments. A diverse student body and staff enrich the educational experience by exposing students to new perspectives and causing them to examine their own perspectives and experiences.

The Volunteers of America of Minnesota Charter School Network

VOA OF MN's vision for sponsoring charter schools includes the creation of a network of diverse schools that leverage their collective knowledge, skills and resources to build capacity for educational excellence and exciting learning opportunities for Minnesota students and families. Charter schools have historically operated in relative isolation, leaving them to confront the same challenges and problems of schools that have come before them without the benefit of their experience. VOA of MN aims to combat this problem by connecting schools in a variety of ways that will enable them to share best practices and resources.

Administrators, teachers and board members from each school have numerous opportunities to interact with each other, face to face, throughout the year. VOA of MN organizes biannual meetings that provide staff development, structured opportunities for sharing and planning for cooperative projects for all sponsored schools. A different school hosts each meeting, and we devote considerable time to learning about the host site. VOA of MN also assists in organizing teacher and student exchanges between schools in the network to facilitate the sharing of best practices and program ideas.

The VOA of MN Charter School Virtual Network is a website (www.voamncharters.org) that enables our schools to share ideas and resources in an online environment. The website includes:

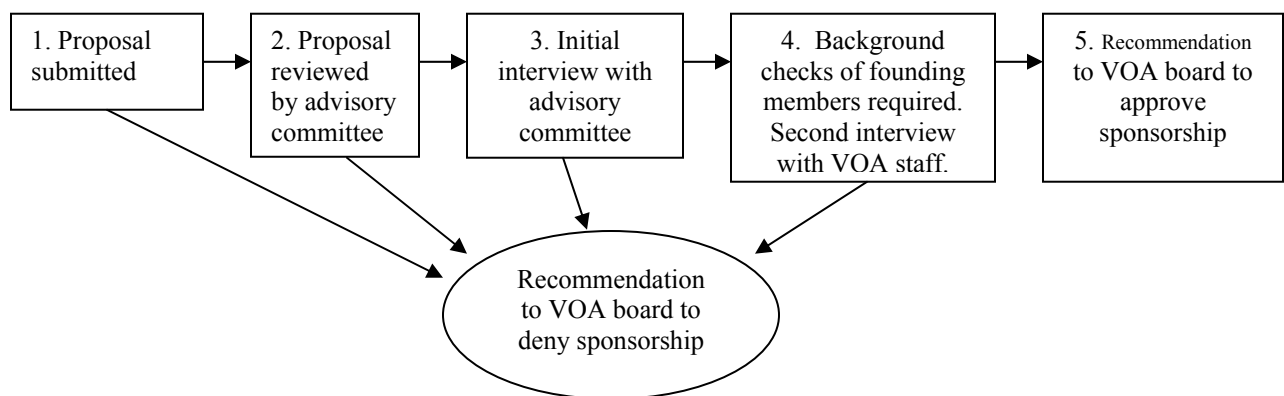
- **Forum-** A place where members of the school community can connect via a bulletin board. The bulletin board connects school staff at all levels (science teachers to science teachers, business manager to business manager, board members to board members, etc.) as well as containing open forums in which anyone can participate on topics such as Service Learning, Accountability, Board Governance, etc. This is a valuable tool for communication and shared information. Teachers are able to earn continuing education units through their participation on the bulletin board.
- **Document Warehouse-** A place for the sharing of all manner of school documents from Graduation Standards Assessment Packages and rubrics to Field Trip Permission Slips. All schools create a great number of documents and systems to ensure an effective school and there is no reason that each school should have to reinvent the wheel in the creation of these systems. This warehouse is an excellent way for schools to share curriculum, project ideas, examples of student work, and administrative forms.
- **School Profiles-** A brief description of each school's general characteristics (mission, size, demographics, location) with links to each school's own website.
- **Calendar of Events-** A listing of events at all VOA-sponsored schools.
- **Student Interaction Area-** A place for students to connect on service learning projects, work collaboratively, interact socially and have fun.

Application Process

The application process is designed to help VOA of MN choose the highest quality charter school applications that are in alignment with our vision and mission. An external Advisory Board of experts in charter school finance, governance, administration, and curriculum carries out the application process under the leadership of program staff.

1. Charter school developers must submit the appropriate materials to the VOA Charter School Office two months prior to the Department of Education deadlines (June 1 for the August 1 deadline, etc.). This submission must include one copy of a complete charter school proposal aligned to MN Dept. of Education format, and ten copies of a business plan that follows the VOA of MN template (appendix A).
2. These materials are reviewed by our charter advisory board through the filter of the VOA charter school hallmarks (small school size, a focus on marginalized students, a focus on Service Learning, a commitment to ethnic and socioeconomic diversity, schools that fill a void in the community).
3. If a proposed school meets these criteria and receives strong positive feedback from the advisory board, the founding group is invited for an interview with the advisory board and the CEO of the organization. The interview will focus on school alignment with VOA vision/mission, the educational and financial viability of the proposal and the founding group's capacity to implement an idea into a reality. VOA of MN favors proposals from groups whose members demonstrate expertise covering a broad range of skills and experience.
4. Founding groups of schools that are chosen to move forward are required to undergo criminal background checks at their own expense. All information submitted is private and is viewed only by VOA Charter School staff. On successful completion of the background checks, we invite founding groups to a second interview with the CEO of VOA and VOA Charter School staff.

Figure 1. Application Process



Start-Up Oversight

VOA of MN is dedicated to working with successful charter school applicants to ensure the opening of a quality, successful school. The 12-18 months prior to opening a charter school are a critical time in which the school is laying the foundation for its success. VOA of MN provides oversight during the start-up phase by holding interim boards accountable to rigorous Start-Up Standards, a self-created work plan (Start-Up Progress Form, Appendix B), and VOA of MN-established Conditions for Opening. In order to defray the costs associated with strong oversight during the start-up period VOA of MN requests that schools budget a sponsorship fee in their federal start-up grant (negotiated on a school-by-school basis).

Start –Up Standards

A set of best practices in school start-up has emerged in VOA of MN's work with charter schools over the past few years. We have used our experience to create a set of start-up standards in nine areas of critical importance to a successful charter school opening. Schools requesting VOA of MN sponsorship agree to be held accountable to these standards of operation in the absence of a compelling argument for an alternative practice (i.e., if the school wishes to use an alternative leadership structure it must provide a detailed description of the structure and its intended benefits).

Project Management

- A single person at each school, the Start-Up Coordinator, is responsible to the board for accomplishing start-up goals (though there may be multiple people working on different aspects of the project).
- The Start-Up Coordinator has clearly defined responsibility and authority (what can be done without specific board approval) and is responsible for reporting to sponsor.

Finance/Business Operations

- The school establishes financial policies prior to receiving state or federal revenue (e.g. who has access to money, who signs checks, what expenditures need explicit board approval).
- The school establishes a system for reporting finances to the Board of Directors and sponsor on a monthly basis.

Leadership

- School leader position has a clear job description.
- School leader is hired using a fair and open process that garners a qualified applicant pool.
- Board/Start-Up Coordinator reports on process and applicant pool to sponsor.

Staffing

- School leader is responsible for hiring staff, in conjunction with the Board of Directors.
- The teaching staff is fully and appropriately licensed.
- The teaching staff includes a balance of experience levels.
- A Professional Development Plan is in place for each staff member prior to the start of the school year.
- A staff evaluation process is in place prior to the start of the school year.

Learning Program

- School leadership and staff create scope and sequence for curriculum at each grade level.
- School leadership and staff create a decision matrix to aid in selection of curriculum materials.
- School leadership and staff create a detailed curriculum plan for at least the first 6 weeks of school (daily plans, etc.).
- Curriculum materials are purchased in a timely manner that allows for staff training and planning.
- Assessments (both standardized and curriculum based) are aligned with day-to-day instruction.

Facility

- A facility needs assessment is completed.
- The facility is in a location that is easily accessible.
- The lease costs are reasonable and do not place the school under unreasonable financial pressure.
- The timelines for any necessary build out/renovation/remodeling are realistic and allow the facility to be ready for full use at least several weeks prior to opening.
- The facility has adequate space to support the proposed learning program and student numbers.

Enrollment

- All recruiting efforts are tied to a comprehensive marketing plan.
- The school creates a database of potential students and families. The database is used, at a minimum, to maintain contact with families, promote marketing events, and disseminate enrollment information.

Governance

- The board adopts and each individual member signs a conflict-of-interest policy.
- Once the federal grant is received and the Start-Up Coordinator is hired the board begins the transition from a “working board” to a “governing board.”
- The board adopts clear roles and responsibilities, by-laws, and board job descriptions.
- The board writes and adopts necessary administrative, financial, programmatic and governing policies.
- The board adopts an evaluation process for the Executive Director/Principal prior to school opening.

Community Outreach

- There is a systematic plan for relationship development with community organizations that have mission alignment with the school.

Start-Up Progress Form

Each school will complete a Start-Up Progress Form (appendix B) in which the interim board identifies its internal deadlines, resources needed and person responsible for accomplishing key

tasks in the start-up process. This form becomes the work plan for the interim board and Start-Up Coordinator. The Start-Up Progress Form is updated on a monthly basis with the sponsor and is used as the basis for regular meetings during the start-up period.

Conditions For Opening

The myriad tasks that charter school founders must complete in the start-up period can be daunting. Many of these tasks are time sensitive and cumulative. From finding an appropriate facility to hiring personnel to securing insurance to creating the learning program, a quality school requires a strong foundation. When one piece of the puzzle is not in place at the right time it can contribute to an unsuccessful opening.

Founders are often pressured to open a school before they are ready for a variety of reasons: they are worried that they will miss out on a prized facility, they are concerned that if they wait, their own child may not be able to attend the school, they firmly believe that there is a need in the community that should be addressed as soon as possible. But there is no good reason for opening a charter school before it is ready as it is very difficult for a school to rebound from the repercussions that often follow. VOA has therefore established conditions for opening, which are signed by both the school and sponsor as an addendum to the contract. They are as follows:

Leadership:

- A Principal/Director shall be hired by March 15

Staffing:

- 75% of the teaching staff will be hired by April 30

Facility:

- A facility has been secured by March 31. Any significant build-out of the site must begin no later than May 1.

Recruiting/Enrollment:

- The school will have a database consisting of contact information for interested students/families that is 125% of projected enrollment by May 1.
- The school will have 75% of projected students officially enrolled by May 31.

If the interim board cannot meet one or more of these conditions, it will submit a plan detailing how the condition will be accomplished by June 1. In the event that the conditions are not met by this deadline, VOA, at its own discretion, may decide to postpone the opening of the school by one year.

Accountability Plan

Charter schools were created on the basis of giving schools the freedom to create an innovative academic program in return for accountability for results. As a charter school sponsor VOA of MN holds schools accountable in three major areas: academic performance, fiscal management and legal compliance. The charter school Accountability Plan is a clear articulation of the school's goals with respect to these critical areas of importance (see appendix C for an example). Each area will have multiple indicators of success and the charter school's performance on each indicator will be rated as:

- **High-** performance is clearly satisfactory;
- **Middle-** performance may be satisfactory, unsatisfactory or inconclusive depending on additional factors which may require further evaluation; or
- **Low-** performance is clearly not satisfactory.

Each Accountability Plan will contain clear definitions of what constitutes a rating of “high”, “middle”, and “low” for each goal. Charter schools sponsored by VOA of MN will include an Accountability Plan Performance Report in their Annual Report detailing the level of achievement attained in each goal area.

Academic Performance- The intent of the Academic Performance section is to provide a multi-faceted understanding of student performance at the charter school. Charter schools are required to set specific and measurable goals in academic and nonacademic areas for which they agree to be held accountable. These goals provide the central focus for the charter school leadership, staff, and families. At least one of the academic goals must be measured by a norm-referenced standardized test.

Fiscal Management- Charter schools receive public funds and must meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management. It is VOA of MN's duty to ensure that these schools are responsible stewards of public funds.

Legal and Contractual Compliance- Charter schools are required to follow many state and federal laws pertaining to schools and are expected to uphold all provisions of the charter school contract. As such, VOA of MN has developed a rigorous system of oversight to verify compliance.

Elements of a well-designed accountability plan include:

- Multiple indicators
- Balance between overall achievement and growth measures
- Follow-up measures of graduates
- Balance of one-time measures with multiple assessments throughout the year
- Balance of external and internal measures of school's performance
- Subgroup performance analyzed
- Multiple perspectives (students, staff, parents, board, sponsor, staff)

*This Accountability Plan is adapted from the Accountability Plan that the Chicago Public School Board developed and uses for schools that it has authorized.

Minnesota Association of Charter Schools Accountability Project

VOA of MN believes that accountability is a continuous improvement process in which the entire school community participates. Through this process school leadership and staff use data to inform their practices, track progress toward school goals in the Accountability Plan and communicate with the school community. All VOA-sponsored schools must agree to participate in the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools Accountability Project (MACS AP) or a similar continuous improvement process. The MACS AP is a three-year continuous improvement process that requires the school to be reflective of its practices on multiple levels and results in NCA accreditation. The MACS AP is driven by five key questions:

1. Is the school faithful to the terms of its contract?
2. Is the school faithful to its stated mission, goals and objectives?
3. Is the academic program a success?
4. Is the school a viable organization?
5. Does the school recognize clearly where growth and development are most essential?

Year One

Administrative Review- VOA and MACS staff visit school to review state laws and other statutes and regulations charter schools must follow. School policies and documents are reviewed to ensure that the school is fulfilling its administrative obligations.

Governance Review and Training- The school board engages in a self-study and identifies training and development opportunities. Board development may include external review and evaluation.

Academic Performance Goal Setting Review- VOA and MACS staff collaborate with the school to turn its mission and general goals into specific, measurable goals and objectives that reflect the reality of the school community. All goals are measured by three sources (triangulation) including internal and external measures. These student achievement goals form the basis of the Accountability Plan along with other school-wide goals. The school and sponsor will negotiate definitions of “high”, “middle”, and “low” achievement levels in relation to each goal, as necessary.

Year Two

School Self-Study- Each of the five key questions of the MACS Accountability Plan contains numerous sub-questions that delve into the various areas in more detail. During the school self-study, all levels of school staff and community come together to answer these questions. The final product is a self-study document.

Critical Friend Visit- At the end of the school self-study, the school will invite a critical friend to visit the school and provide feedback on the school-self study process and document. The critical friend will spend two days on site and review the school self-study document with its key contributors. The school will take the feedback from the critical friend and amend the school self-study document as needed.

Year Three

Site Team Visit- A team of five to seven educators, led by a Team Leader, will spend two days at the school “validating” the school self-study document and creating their own report which includes observations, commendations and recommendations.

Ongoing Oversight

In addition to participating in the MACS AP or other continuous improvement processes that the charter school has identified, VOA carries out regular oversight duties to ensure the administrative, academic, governance and financial viability of the school.

Administrative Oversight

Regular site visits- VOA is committed to making at least four site visits per school year. Site visits follow an informal protocol that results in written feedback. VOA will also participate as a Site Team member for the MACS AP in the school's third year.

Teacher licensure- All instructional staff in Minnesota charter schools must be appropriately licensed or have received a waiver or variance from the Minnesota Board of Teaching. VOA requests and checks file folder numbers for all instructional staff.

Enrollment process- VOA will monitor the school enrollment process to ensure that it is open and fair and does not discriminate against any individual or group of students.

Investigate complaints- VOA will investigate complaints made by community members that may constitute a violation of law or the charter contract. If such a complaint is substantiated VOA will work with the school's Board of Directors to resolve the matter.

Academic Oversight

Review of Quarterly and Annual Reports- Each charter school is expected to submit three quarterly and one annual report to VOA. The contents of the reports are specified by VOA and document progress toward meeting academic and nonacademic goals identified in the contract.

Governance Oversight

Regular review of meeting minutes- The charter school is expected to present board meeting minutes to VOA on a timely basis. The minutes are reviewed for compliance with the charter contract and applicable law, such as the Open Meetings Law.

Attendance at school board meetings- VOA is committed to attending at least four board meetings each school year and staff are available to attend specific meetings upon request.

Financial Oversight

Review of annual budget- Minnesota law requires charter schools to adopt an annual budget. The charter school presents the budget to VOA for review and comment no later than two months before the beginning of the fiscal year.

Review of monthly financial statements- The charter school is expected to present VOA with the same financial statements that the school's board receives.

Review of annual audit- Charter schools are required by law to present the state Department of Education with an audit report for the previous fiscal year by December 31 of each year. A copy of the report must be sent to VOA. VOA also expects to be copied on any board response to the management letter if should one be issued.

Figure 2. Range of Possible Interventions

Status	Triggered By	May Result In
Notice of Concern	Signs of weak performance identified through routine monitoring; through implementation, compliance, or performance reviews; or by other means. Repeated failure to submit required documents on a timely basis.	Letter from VOA to the charter school’s Board of Directors detailing areas of concern. <i>and/or</i> Review and reconsideration of goals and performance targets in the Accountability Plan. <i>and/or</i> VOA recommendation that the school develop a Performance Improvement Plan.
Notice of Deficiency	Failure to meet multiple performance targets; or glaring or repeated failure to meet a single performance target. Failure to comply with applicable law or significant failure to comply with Board condition(s) of the charter.	Letter from VOA to charter school Board of Directors detailing areas of deficiency. <i>and/or</i> Performance Improvement Plan—containing specific improvement objectives, technical assistance requirements, and schedule for remedial action—negotiated with VOA.
Notice of Probationary Status	Continued failure to meet performance targets; and failure to meet objectives of Performance Improvement Plan. Continued failure to comply with applicable law or with the charter.	Performance Improvement Plan imposed by VOA. <i>and/or</i> Assignment of technical assistance team by VOA. <i>and/or</i> In certain cases, VOA may appoint an agent to monitor the implementation of the Performance Improvement Plan and the activities of the technical assistance team.
Charter Review	Extended pattern of failure to comply or to meet performance targets; or failure to successfully address terms of probation.	Recommendation to revoke, not to revoke, or to impose lesser sanctions. <i>and/or</i> Decision to commence or not to commence revocation proceedings made by VOA.
Charter Revocation	Charter Review results in recommendation to revoke.	Written notice from VOA stating reasons for proposed revocation and informing charter school of right to an informal hearing. Record of informal hearing. Decision to revoke or not to revoke made by VOA.

*This Range of Possible Interventions policy is adapted from the Table of Remedies for Substandard Performance that the D.C. Public Charter School Board developed and uses for schools that it has authorized.

Contract Renewal, Non-renewal and Revocation

Renewal Process

VOA of MN views contract renewal as an on-going process that is engaged in by the Board of Directors, school leadership and the sponsor, which culminates in the school making an application for contract renewal.

Communication

Throughout this process it is important to maintain a high level of communication, both formal and informal, between the Board of Directors, school leadership, and VOA of MN. The renewal process should be fair and equitable and contain no “surprises”. Regular formal communication will come in the form of quarterly and annual reports from the school, and VOA of MN written responses. VOA of MN responses to school reports may contain praise, minor constructive criticism or a formal Notice of Concern, Notice of Deficiency or Notice of Probationary Status (as laid out in the Range of Possible Interventions section) which require a prescribed response from the school’s Board of Directors. VOA’s response to the annual report in the second year of the renewal cycle will indicate if the school is on-track for renewal and/or what steps need to be taken. The application for renewal (appendix d) should be submitted on February 28th (in lieu of the Quarter 3 Report) of the third year of operation.

Continuous Improvement

Starting a new school is a complex endeavor akin to starting a new business. It is important that a great deal of energy is invested in creating a strong organization with built-in continuous improvement processes. For this reason, VOA of MN will place a strong emphasis on creating a viable organization in terms of finance, governance, and operations during the first renewal cycle. This will be ascertained through on-going reporting (quarterly reports) and various other documentation created as a part of the school’s continuous improvement process (MACS AP or NCA) and this information will be summarized in the Renewal Application. A strong emphasis will be placed on building the infrastructure necessary to support and sustain a strong academic program.

The charter school will be required to create a process for establishing a performance baseline for new and future students. The first year baseline will be used to create meaningful academic and nonacademic goals that will become a part of the school’s Accountability Plan and are added to the contract. The first application for renewal will be prepared during the spring of the third year of operation. Schools applying for renewal should provide strong evidence that they have implemented processes for gathering meaningful student data and using it to drive programmatic decisions.

Renewal Application

The Renewal Application (Appendix D) should be no longer than 10-12 pages and address the following areas: academic performance, fiscal management, legal and contractual compliance, and organizational viability. The report should discuss the progress the school has made, existing and future challenges, and how it has responded directly to any concerns/challenges that it has faced over the term of the contract. For example, if a school has had major financial problems, it might devote more space to discussing how the issue has been addressed and/or resolved. Because renewal is approached as an ongoing process, the application should be thought of as a summary or re-cap.

Decision Making Process

The VOA of MN Internal Accountability Board makes contract renewal decisions. The board is comprised of top-level management from various agency programs. The board reviews the Renewal Application and makes one of the following recommendations:

- Renew;
- Renew with improvement plan; or
- Not renew.

The board's decision will hold the school accountable for the goals laid out in the Accountability Plan and shall give fair consideration to all Indicators. If the Renewal Application contains no serious Low Indicators the board shall act to renew the charter, or renew the charter with an improvement plan required.

VOA of MN may act to not renew a charter if it is clearly demonstrated that the charter school:

- (1) Committed a material violation of any of the conditions, standards, or procedures set forth in the charter,
- (2) Failed to meet or make reasonable progress toward achievement of the content standards or pupil performance standards identified in the charter, including the standards in the Accountability Plan,
- (3) Failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management, including those set forth in the Charter School Agreement and the Accountability Plan, or
- (4) Violated any provision of law from which the Charter School was not exempted

If the recommendation is to not renew, the charter school board will have the opportunity to request, in writing, an informal hearing with the VOA of MN Internal Accountability Board within 14 days of receiving the recommendation. Failure by the charter school board to make a written request for a hearing within the 14-day period shall be treated as acquiescence to the recommendation. Upon receiving a timely written request for a hearing, VOA of MN will give reasonable notice to the charter school board of the hearing date. VOA of MN will conduct the informal hearing before making a final decision. VOA of MN will take final action to renew or not renew a contract by the last day of classes in the school year.

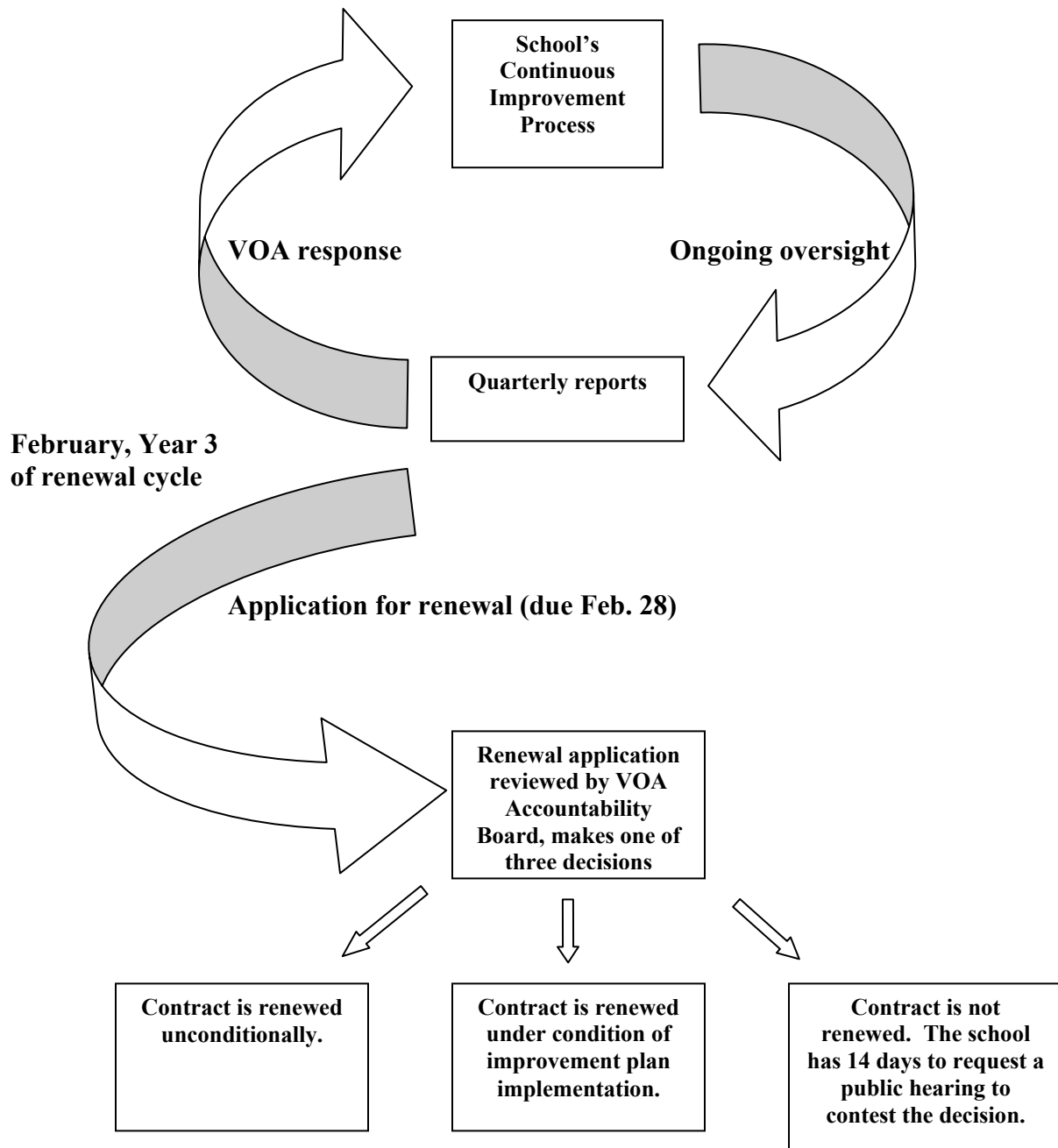
Charter Revocation

VOA of MN may act at any time to revoke a charter during the term of the Charter School Agreement if the VOA of MN clearly demonstrates that the charter school:

- (1) Committed a material violation of any of the conditions, standards, or procedures set forth in the charter,
- (2) Failed to meet or make reasonable progress toward achievement of the academic performance standards identified in the Accountability Plan,
- (3) Failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management, including those set forth in the charter contract and the Accountability Plan, or
- (4) Violated any provision of law from which the charter school was not exempted

In all circumstances, the VOA of MN shall follow the requirements of the Minnesota charter school law (Minn. Stat. 124D.10), including all due process requirements, regarding the processes required for revocation, renewal, and non-renewal.

Figure 3. VOA Renewal Process



Appendices

VOA Business Plan Template

I. School Description

- a. Vision/mission statement.
- b. A brief history of the origin of the school.
- c. Description of school (grade levels served, etc.).
- d. Governance- Section II from Consolidated Charter School Application (please make clear the level of involvement of each planning team/interim board member).

II. The Learning Program

- a. Curriculum- Section IIIA from Consolidated Charter School Application.
- b. Educational Delivery- Section IIIB from Consolidated Charter School Application.
- c. Special Education- Provide a description of how the school will meet the needs of students with special needs. What are the programmatic implications of serving students with special needs? This section should demonstrate that the school has a strong understanding of special education issues (it needs to do more than just say that you will contract with someone and agree to follow the law).

III. Accountability plan

- a. State the goals for which the school agrees to be held accountable. Section IV from Consolidated Charter School Application.
- b. Describe how the school will communicate its accountability to key constituents (parents, VOA, state).

IV. Market Analysis

- a. Description of the area or market/district(s) that the school will serve and how this school will differentiate itself.
- b. How will the school ensure that it is perceived by a diverse population as a viable option?
- c. Target market/student population (what segment of district's population do you plan to serve?).
- d. Competition-other school(s) seeking the same student population to include private, public, magnet, parochial and other charter schools.

V. Marketing Strategy

- a. Overall strategy- building awareness in community and with students, parents. This should have a strong relationship to your market analysis and address community perceptions of charter schools and your school in particular.
- b. Identify potential feeder schools and how your marketing will target these students.
- c. Specific admission and recruiting plans and policies.

VI. Management Plan

- a. Administrative structure and staffing (resumes of key personnel).
- b. Staffing plan (section V from proposal).
- c. Facilities needs assessment- what kinds of spaces are acceptable? How much space will be necessary? What kind of financing will you pursue (if necessary to build out)? Etc.
- d. Technology assessment- what are your needs?
- e. Operating plan/schedule of work for next year (brief overview)

VII. Financial Plan

- a. Start up and 3 year operating budget with detailed assumptions (section IX from proposal). Please provide percentages of budget spend on Administration, Instructional Program and Operations.
- b. Monthly cash flow statement for first school year- demonstrate use of one-time start-up funds.

VOA Charter School Business Plan Rubric

***Business Plans must have all required elements and score in the second or third tier of each section in order to be recommended for authorization.**

I. School Description

The proposal:

<u>Tier I, 1-3 points</u>	<u>Tier II, 4-6 points</u>	<u>Tier III, 7-10 points</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school does not have a mission statement. • The plan does not offer a brief description of the school. • Does not include a description of the membership of the interim Board. • Does not include a description of proposed membership of the permanent Board. • Does not include a description of the school administration and management responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has a vague or confusing mission statement that lacks supporting mission directives. • The plan provides a brief description of the school that is fragmented and/or vague • Describes a membership of the interim Board that represents few important skills and experiences, such as: finance, public relations, curriculum development or educational programming, etc. • Describes a proposed membership of the permanent Board that represents some variety of stakeholders such as parents, teachers, and community members. • Includes a vague description of the school administration and management responsibilities in the required areas that is in keeping with best practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has a clear mission statement with supporting mission directives. • The plan provides a brief description of the school that is clear and cohesive. • Describes a membership of the interim Board that represents a wide variety of skills and experiences, such as: finance, public relations, curriculum development or educational programming, etc. • Describes a proposed membership of the permanent Board that represents a variety of stakeholders including parents, teachers, and community members. • Includes a thorough description of the school administration and management responsibilities in the required areas that is in keeping with best practice.
<p><i>Points = _____ / 10</i></p>		

II. The Learning Program

A. Curriculum

The proposal:

<u>Tier I, 1-3 points</u>	<u>Tier II, 4-6 points</u>	<u>Tier III, 7-10 points</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes a vague or confusing description of the school's learning program and does not provide documentation that the learning program is research-based. Does not demonstrate any understanding of the Minnesota Graduation Standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes a vague or confusing description of the school's learning program (includes any curriculum or packaged programs the school will use, as well as a typical school day) and provides documentation that the learning program is research-based. Demonstrates a limited understanding of the Minnesota Graduation Standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes a thorough description of the school's learning program (includes any curriculum or packaged programs the school will use, as well as a typical school day) and provides documentation that the learning program is research-based. Demonstrates a thorough understanding of the Minnesota Graduation Standards.
<i>Points = _____ / 10</i>		

B. Educational Delivery

Required elements:

The proposal:

<u>Tier I, 0-1 points</u>	<u>Tier II, 2-3 points</u>	<u>Tier III, 4-5 points</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a plan for parent involvement that is vague and inconsistent with the purpose(s) of the school and is not research-based. Provides a vague or confusing description of the classroom structure that is inconsistent with the learning program described in IIIA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a plan for parent involvement that is consistent with the purpose(s) of the school, but is not research-based. Provides a description of the classroom structure that is not consistent with the learning program described in IIIA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a plan for parent involvement that is consistent with the purpose(s) of the school and is research-based. Provides a clear description of the classroom structure that is consistent with the learning program described in IIIA.
<i>Points = _____ / 5</i>		

C. Special Education

Required elements:

The proposal:

<u>Tier I, 0-1 points</u>	<u>Tier II, 2-3 points</u>	<u>Tier III, 4-5 points</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a weak description of how the school will meet the needs of special education students. Demonstrates a weak understanding of special education issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides an adequate description of how the school will meet the needs of special education students. Demonstrates a developing understanding of special education issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a thoughtful description of how the school will meet the needs of special education students. Demonstrates a thorough understanding of special education issues.
<i>Points = _____ / 5</i>		

III. Accountability

Required elements:

The proposal:

Tier I, 1-3 points	Tier II, 4-6 points	Tier III, 7-10 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contains a vague description of an accountability plan. • Does not include a plan for implementation of the accountability plan. • Contains student achievement goals that are weak or unrealistic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contains an accountability plan with an overarching goal of continuous improvement. • Includes a plan for implementation of the accountability plan. • Contains student achievement goals that are reasonable and attainable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contains a broad and thorough accountability plan with an overarching goal of continuous improvement. • Includes a clear plan for implementation of the accountability plan. • Contains student achievement goals that are rigorous yet attainable.
<i>Points = _____ /10</i>		

IV. Market Analysis

Required elements:

The proposal:

Tier I, 1-3 points	Tier II, 4-6 points	Tier III, 7-10 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contains little information about the school's intended market and no analysis of special implications for the school. • Identification of competitors is incomplete or non-existent, there is no description of how the school will differentiate itself. • Does not establish a clear community need for the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contains a description of the school's intended market, including geographic and student population, with little or no analysis of special implications for the school. • Identifies area competitors but does not describe how the school will differentiate itself. • Establishes a clear community need for the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contains a clear description of the school's intended market, including geographic area and student population, and analysis of special implications for the school. • Identifies area competitors and describes how the school will differentiate itself. • Establishes a clear community need for the school.
Points = _____ /10		

V. Marketing Strategy

Required elements:

The proposal:

Tier I, 1-3 points	Tier II, 4-6 points	Tier III, 7-10 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan contains a vague marketing strategy that does not include measurable benchmarks. • Plan does not contain specific admission and recruiting plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan contains a marketing strategy that does not include measurable benchmarks and outcomes. • Plan contains plans for admission and recruiting that are not specific and do not include measurable benchmarks and outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan contains a comprehensive marketing strategy with measurable benchmarks and outcomes. • Plan contains specific plans for admission and recruiting with measurable benchmarks and outcomes.
Points = _____ /10		

VI. Management Plan

Required elements:

The proposal:

<u>Tier I, 1-3 points</u>	<u>Tier II, 4-6 points</u>	<u>Tier III, 7-10 points</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes a staffing level that is unrealistic and inconsistent with the purpose of the school. • Contains a description of the roles of various staff members that is vague or confusing. • Contains a facilities needs assessment that is unrealistic and incomplete. • Does not contain an operating plan/work schedule for the next year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes a staffing level that is realistic, yet inconsistent with the purpose of the school. • Describes the roles of various staff members. • Contains a facilities needs assessment. • Contains an operating plan/work schedule for the next year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes a staffing level that is realistic and consistent with the purpose of the school. • Clearly describes the roles of various staff members. • Contains a facilities needs assessment that is comprehensive and realistic. • Contains an operating plan/work schedule for the next year that identifies important milestones and outcomes.
<i>Points = _____ / 10</i>		

VII. Financial Plan

Required elements:

The proposal:

<u>Tier I, 1-6 points</u>	<u>Tier II, 7-13 points</u>	<u>Tier III, 14-20 points</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides an inadequate budget proposal that includes a vague narrative description of assumptions used in the budget. • Provides weak rationale for enrollment projections that does not include a description of supporting evidence (market study, completed enrollment forms). • School proposal is not financially viable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides adequate budget proposal that includes a vague narrative description of the assumptions used in the budget. • Provides a rationale for enrollment projections that includes a description of supporting evidence (market study, completed enrollment forms). • School proposal may be financially viable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a thorough and complete budget proposal that includes a clearly written narrative that describes the assumptions used in the budget. • Provides a strong rationale for enrollment projections that includes a description of supporting evidence (market study, completed enrollment forms). • School proposal is financially viable.
<i>Points = _____ / 20</i>		

VIII. Alignment with Volunteers of America Hallmarks

The proposal:

<u>Tier I, 1-3 points</u>	<u>Tier II, 4-6 points</u>	<u>Tier III, 7-10 points</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school proposal is not clearly aligned with one of the VOA hallmarks. • The proposed school does not compliment the existing VOA School Network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school proposal is aligned with one or more of the VOA hallmarks, but alignment is tenuous or superficial. • The proposed school somewhat compliments the existing network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school proposal is closely aligned to one or more of the VOA hallmarks. • The proposed school compliments the existing VOA School Network.
<i>Points = _____ / 10</i>		

Monthly VOA Charter School Sponsorship Start Up Progress Report

Task **Person(s) Responsible** **Resources needed** **Completion date**

Facilities

Conduct needs assessment				
Identify options				
Evaluate/inspect potential sites				
Review codes/ordinances/regulations				
Obtain resources for financing a facility				
Select site, consider expansion potential				
Consider how the facility supports the curriculum				
Acquire site				
Enlist facility design help				
Consult with Norm Chafee on lease aid				
Address building security issues				
Secure build-out financing				
Secure rates for second term of lease				
Make necessary repairs/installations				
Arrange for custodial/maintenance services, if needed				
Establish insurance policies				

Financial Management/Business Plan

Create a comprehensive business plan which includes a 4 year budget projection and 4 year market analysis)				
Identify potential board members with a financial background				
Establish relationship, open account with local banking institution				
Refine planning grant budget if nec.				
Designate financial manager for school				
Hire auditor				
Identify check writers and signers				

Establish separation of duties				
Develop internal controls and fiscal policies				
Establish staff benefits				
Develop and monitor cash flow plan				
Acquire forms (purchase orders, etc.)				
Schedule monthly board financial reviews				
Identify and purchase financial management software				
Identify a team member to provide VOA with monthly financial updates for grant money				

Governance and Management

Ensure that contract with VOA is signed within 90 days of CFL approval				
Determine governance structure				
Recruit board members with specific expertise (law, finance, real estate)				
Develop by-laws (MACS provides free legal assistance)				
Define committees and write descriptions				
Develop job description for Board of Directors and Officers				
Develop a board manual				
Establish a board calendar				
Define communication methods to school leaders, staff, and community				
Identify legal status, tax-exempt status (file for 501c3 status)				
Obtain board liability insurance (Directors and Officers)				
Perform board self-evaluation				
Plan for transition of permanent board				
Review public meetings law				

Learning Program

Develop scope and sequence of learning outcomes				
Create a matrix of curriculum resource options to make informed decision				
Purchase curriculum materials				
Identify instructional strategies the school will use to achieve academic goals				
Identify and plan for any curricular staff development needs				
Identify and purchase appropriate standardized assessments				
Develop curriculum based measures to track progress toward academic goals				

School Culture

Develop a student handbook				
Develop a school disciplinary policy that is compliant with the MN Pupil Fair Dismissal Act				
Train staff in implementation of discipline policy, student conduct				
Develop an intake process for students and families				

Personnel and Policy Development

Hire start-up coordinator and recruitment coordinator				
Establish personnel policies/handbook				
Create student and parent handbook/ policy manual				
Determine staffing needs				
Develop hiring policies and procedures				
Establish terms of employment				
Design benefit packages, vacation policies, pension policies, workers compensation, etc.				
Develop staff policies				
Write/post job descriptions/ads				
Screen and select potential candidates				
Conduct background/reference checks				
Conduct orientation				

Create personnel files				
Design discipline policies, code of ethics, and student responsibility code				
Establish enrollment, attendance, transportation, food services, dress code and harassment policies				
Develop a school calendar				
Acquire medical forms (students and staff)				
Design teacher evaluation system				
Design staff development plans				

Regulatory issues

Review your state charter school law				
Review civil rights/equity issues				
Develop a health and safety policy handbook				

Special Education

Identify and hire Special Education Director				
Identify and hire Special Education Teacher				
Assign a interim board member to make sure Special Education Assurances checklist is fulfilled				
Identify contractors for supplemental services (speech, psychologist, etc.)				
Identify staff member to learn EDRS to ensure flow of Special Education funding				
Identify staff member responsible for Special Education record keeping procedures and district bill-back				
Create a system for identifying special needs students				

Community Relations/Marketing

Create a marketing committee				
Develop a marketing plan				
Identify strategies to deal with external controversy/internal conflict				
Develop appropriate communications materials (brochures, newsletters)				
Identify community events at which to market the school				
Consider hiring a marketing/enrollment coordinator				
Make parent/community involvement opportunities available				

Identify strategies to recruit a diverse student body (community groups, etc.)				
Implement strategies to avoid burnout				

Accountability

Set date, prior to opening, to participate in administrative review with MACS and VOA				
Set date to participate in goal setting exercise with school community, MACS, and VOA				

Service Learning

Develop a plan for ensuring that service learning opportunities are embedded in the curriculum				
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Partnerships

Identify potential partners in the community, develop plan to build relationships				
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HARBOR CITY INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN

A. Academic Performance

The intent of the Academic Performance section is to provide a multi-faceted understanding of student performance at the charter school. Charter schools are required to set specific and measurable goals in academic and nonacademic areas for which they agree to be held accountable. These goals provide the central focus for the charter school leadership, staff, and families. At least one of the academic goals must be measured by a norm-referenced standardized test.

Harbor City International School shall participate fully in the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments and the Minnesota Test of Basic Skills. Data from these assessments will be compiled and evaluated as described below.

Academic Goal: All students will improve reading comprehension skills as measured by curriculum based measures and standardized test scores.

Indicator	High	Middle	Low
MAPS: Reading Percent at or above national norms	More than 75%	50% - 74%	Less than 50%
MAPS: Reading Growth above prior year	1.0 years or more	0.8 or 0.9 years	0.7 or fewer years
HCIS Project Rubric: Growth above beginning of year (if initial score was 1.0)	.4-.5	.3	>.3
HCIS Project Rubric: Growth above beginning of year (if initial score was 1.1-2.0)	2.0-2.8	1.4-1.9	>1.4
HCIS Project Rubric: Growth above beginning of year (if initial score was 2.1-3.0)	.7-1.5	.4-.5	>.4
ACT: PLAN Reading Percent above a score of 19	More than 75%	50% - 74%	Less than 50%

Academic Goal: Students will demonstrate the qualities of a self-directed learner.

Indicator	High	Middle	Low
Student Individual Goals Percent achieving a minimum of one individual goal	90-100%	70% - 89%	Less than 70%
Student Assignment Completion Rate Percent completing 90% of assignments	80-100%	70-80%	Less than 70%

Non-Academic Goal: All students at HCIS will participate in engaging, high quality, service learning projects.

Indicator	High	Middle	Low
Avg. Service Hours Completed 90% percent achievement rate. Hours must be supported by documentation defined below *	20	15	10

*Service hours must be supported by the following documentation:

1. written and oral reflection by student (at HCIS high standards)
2. rubric assessment
3. documentation of work done (pre-, during-, and post- photos and written plans)
4. involvement in a variety of service learning areas:
 1. labor-based
 2. technical tasks (mechanical, mental)
 3. human services – senior citizens, ESL, homeless, etc.
 4. sharing the story of another
 5. a project that connects two different communities (HCIS, international, downtown, church, family, offices, etc.)

Non-Academic Goal: All students will create and engage in a comprehensive individual post secondary plan (IPSP) in accordance to the school’s IPSP criteria.

Indicator	High	Middle	Low
Individual Post Secondary Plan Percentage of students completing	90-100%	70% - 89%	Less than 70%
Individual Post Secondary Plan Percent completing 90% of assignments	80-100%	70-80%	Less than 70%

Statewide Testing

Indicator	High	Middle	Low
MCA- Reading Percentage of students above proficiency cutoff score	70-100%	41% - 69%	Less than 40%
MCA- Reading 95% participation of subgroups	All	All but one	More than one subgroup
MCA- Math Percentage of students above proficiency cutoff score	70-100%	41% - 69%	Less than 40%
MCA- Math 95% participation of subgroups	All	All but one	More than one subgroup

B. Fiscal Management

The parties acknowledge that the Minnesota Charter Schools Law requires a charter school to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management. This requirement has two underlying purposes: to ensure the successful operation of the school into the future and to ensure the proper use of public funds. The following fiscal management Indicators will be included in each Performance Report.

Indicator	High	Middle	Low
Balanced Budget: 1) Prior-year balanced budget successfully implemented, 2) Realistic current-year balanced budget plan	Both elements present	Current-year budget balanced. Prior-year budget not balanced.	Current-year budget not balanced
Financial Audit Findings	No findings	Any Minor finding(s)	Any repeated finding; any Major finding
Financial Obligations: pension payments, payroll taxes, insurance coverage, loan payments and terms	All in good standing	Non-payment with realistic plan to make payment; non-compliance with loan terms,	Non-payment without realistic plan to make payment: non-compliance with loan terms.

The charter school shall provide VOA of MN with a copy of its annual budget and quarterly cash flow projections for each fiscal year by July 1 of each fiscal year. VOA of MN Board shall use such budget and cash flow statements, along with any other relevant information, to determine if the charter school has a realistic current year balanced budget plan. VOA of MN shall use the financial statements presented in the charter school's annual financial audit, along with any other relevant information, to determine if the charter school maintained a balanced budget during the prior-year.

The charter school shall cause each of the components of the Financial Obligations Indicator to be tested as part of its annual financial audit.

An audit finding shall be considered Minor unless VOA of MN determines a finding is Major. If VOA of MN believes an audit finding may be Major, it shall obtain an opinion from a qualified, third-party professional regarding the importance of the finding. VOA of MN shall also ask the charter school to respond to the finding.

In general, a finding will be considered Major if it indicates a deliberate act of wrongdoing, reckless conduct or causes a loss of confidence in the abilities or integrity of the school or seriously jeopardizes the continued operation of the school. Classification of a finding as Major shall be the sole discretion of VOA of MN.

C. Compliance-

Each Annual Report shall specifically rate the school's performance in relation to the Compliance requirements listed below as "High," "Middle," or "Low." The charter school shall cause the Indicators be tested at least once each contract period (typically three years) as part of the charter school's audit in conformance with law:

1. Minnesota Open Meetings Law (Minn. Stat. 471.705),
2. Public Employment Relations Act (Minn. Stat. 179A),
3. Contract with appropriately licensed teachers (Minn. Stat. 122A.15),
4. School district audit requirements (Minn. Stat. 123B.75 to 123B.83),
5. Student immunization records (Minn. Stat. 121A.15),
6. Minnesota Human Rights Act (Chapter 63),
7. Equal opportunity in athletic programs (Minn. Stat. 121A.04),
8. Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act (Minn. Stat. 124A.40 to 121A.56),
9. Minnesota Public Schools Fee Law (Minn. Stat. 123B.34 to 123B.39),
10. Education of Special Education students (Minn. Stat. 125A.02, 125A.03, 125A.24, 125A.65),
11. Conformance of the school's governance structure pursuant to Section 4 of the contract,
12. Compliance with quarterly report requirements of the sponsor pursuant to Section 4 of the contract,
13. Ongoing presence of management and financial controls required by Section 8 of the contract,
14. Administration of an open enrollment process and lottery pursuant to Section 7 of the contract.

In each case, "High" shall be complete compliance with the law and the charter school Agreement, "Middle" shall be a Minor violation of the law or the Agreement, and "Low" shall be a Major violation of the law or the Agreement.

If VOA of MN believes a violation has occurred which would lead to the classification of Indicator as Middle or Low, and it had not been included in the Annual Report, it shall first ask the charter School to respond to the information upon which the classification would be based. If VOA of MN believes a violation has occurred which may be material, it shall also obtain an opinion from a qualified third-party professional(s) regarding the importance of the violation.

In general, a violation will be considered Major if it indicates a deliberate act of wrongdoing, reckless conduct or causes a loss of confidence in the abilities or integrity of the school or seriously jeopardizes the continued operation of the school. Classification of a finding as material shall be the sole discretion of VOA of MN.

Appendix D

Application to Volunteers of America of Minnesota for Charter Contract Renewal

I. Academic Program

- a. Has the school made reasonable progress in meeting the Academic Performance goals established in the Accountability Plan?
- b. Has the school performance improved and/or significantly improved on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments?
- c. Has the school implemented a system for gathering academic baseline data on students? Does the system inform instructional practices and drive decision-making?

II. Fiscal Management

- a. Has the school implemented a balanced budget for all three years of its charter agreement?
- b. Has the school received any significant audit findings for any of the fiscal years covered in the contract? If so, please describe the steps the school has taken to address the auditor's findings.
- c. Has the school remained in good standing with all financial obligations (pension, taxes, insurance, etc.)?

III. Legal and Contractual Compliance

- a. Has the school complied with applicable state and federal laws?
- b. Has the school complied with all aspects of the charter contract?

IV. Organizational Viability

- a. Has the school participated fully in a continuous improvement process?
- b. Has the school made reasonable progress in meeting internally established goals resulting from the continuous improvement process?