A Model RFP

For "Second Generation" Evaluations of Charter Schools and Chartering

The latest in a series of reports on the changing face of public education

April 2004

ee **education|evolving**

ABOUT THE CONCEPT OF AN 'OPEN SECTOR' IN EDUCATION

Much of the work being done by Education|Evolving is to help create and sustain an "Open Sector" in public education – in Minnesota and elsewhere in the country. By "Open Sector," we mean a "space" in public education that is open to new entrants – new schools that are started from scratch by teachers, parents, community organizations and multi-school networks. The "Open Sector" is also open to new authorizers or sponsors – entities other than school districts that over-see schools. The "Open Sector" is open to new learning programs and to new ways of governing and managing schools. And, as part of a broadening definition of public education, the "Open Sector" is open to all students who choose to attend schools in that sector.

The "Open Sector" is based on the premise that we cannot get the degree of change and im-provement we need in education by relying only on fixing the schools we now have. And, to get enough new schools that are fundamentally dif-ferent, we need a combination of public policies and private actions that will allow new schools to emerge and that will create an environment in which they can succeed. This kind of positive envi-ronment for creating and sustaining new schools can be established on a state-level through act-ions led by state policy makers. It can also be done – and is certainly needed – in major urban communities all across America.

Though chartered schools may be the most visible part of the "Open Sector" today, this concept of a positive environment for creating and sustaining successful new schools is not limited to char-ters. The "Open Sector" can also include schools operating within a district or state on some kind of contract other than a charter – as long as they are truly autonomous, accountable and open to all students who chose them.

There is also no prescribed or uniform learning program presumed by this vision for creating many more schools new. In fact, there's an urgent need to better understand, respect and address the individual differences in students. It's likely, however, that successful new schools in the "Open Sector" will be smaller and that they will make it possible for all students to take a more active role in their learning and to develop more direct and nurturing relationships with adults.

ABOUT THIS REPORT AND ITS AUTHORS

This publication is the second product in a year-long initiative by Education|Evolving designed to encourage states, authorizers, academics, the media and others to fundamentally change how they evaluate chartering – and how they decide whether the laws, the sponsors, the schools and other elements of the charter sector are working as intended. The premise behind this initiative is that evaluation should be done on the *institutional innovation of chartering* – not just on the *schools* that *result from the chartering process*. If properly done, such evaluations should be of particular assistance to policy makers in making changes in charter laws and other aspects of the legal and administrative environments in which chartering takes place.

This Model RFP builds on an earlier E|E report by its co-founder **Ted Kolderie** that made the initial case for a fundamentally different way of evaluating chartered schools and chartering. Much of the work in drafting the Model RFP was done by **Bryan Hassel**, president of North Carolina-based Public Impact, and **Alex Medler**, a Boulder-based education policy consultant and former director of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Charter Schools. Final editing and production sup-ervision was provided by **Jon Schroeder**, Education|Evolving's coordinator.

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TO BE VALUABLE, EVALUATIONS MUST ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Overview

As the charter movement grows, so will the effort to study it. Policymakers, researchers, funders, the media, and the public are extremely interested in the charter school movement's success. State leaders seek to secure future improvement, in part, by evaluating the quality of the schools and programs operating now. As a result, over the next five years, researchers will conduct dozens of "charter school evaluations."

To be valuable, these studies must ask the right questions and yield answers that inform all of those concerned with the outcomes of chartering *as state strategy for reform*. Toward that end, Education/Evolving created the following document. It is designed to help states, funders, and others solicit and select proposals that will document and analyze a state's charter program in ways that provide the most valuable information.

This RFP will produce studies that examine both:

1. **Chartered schools**. What kinds of schools are forming? What is the range and quality of activities in individual chartered schools and the effects of these activities on student outcomes?

2. **Chartering as a strategy**. How well is chartering working as a *strategy* for improving public education more broadly?

Previous evaluations of charter programs focused

primarily on the former. This first generation of chartered school evaluations provided a good "scan" of the chartered sector. These studies answered basic questions about the demographics and growth of chartered schools. Unfortunately, they primarily did so by treating chartered schools as if they were all alike, assuming that whether or not a school had a charter somehow determined what happened in it. This RFP will produce a second generation of evaluations that moves beyond this earlier approach by disaggregating different types of chartered schools and examining the systemic effects of this reform.

The section of this RFP focused on chartered schools aims to push the analysis of these schools from the first to the second generation in two ways. First, the RFP encourages evaluators to document the *variety* of practices emerging among chartered schools. In any state there is likely to be more variation among the chartered schools than between chartered and non-chartered schools. To learn from this diversity we must first discover the specific reforms that individual chartered schools are implementing in their learning programs, fiscal practices, and organizational approaches.

Second, the RFP approaches the appraisal of chartered schools' *performance* differently. Previous evaluations typically tried to ask: "Are chartered schools working?" A much better question is: "What is working and not working in the chartered schools sector?" An even more important

question is: "Why?" Evaluations produced following this RFP will not rely on measures of school effectiveness that treat all charter schools the same. Nor will they offer conclusions regarding charter performance by comparing all children in chartered schools with similar students in non-chartered schools. Instead, this RFP will produce evaluations that determine which of the specific practices and models in chartered schools are most successful.

The latter half of this RFP calls for studies that examine chartering *as a statewide strategy for improvement*. It is not enough to gather information about the chartered schools. In addition, it is vital to look at the effects of chartering, in the aggregate, on public education in the state. This includes examining the infrastructure that generates new schools; the general patterns in school creation; the quality and rigor of oversight mechanisms; the variety of supports in place for chartered schools; and the ways traditional school districts respond to chartering.

The success of the strategy of chartering relies on more than whether or how districts' respond to chartered schools. The collection of new schools that are created through chartering and those new schools generated by districts through various mechanisms represent a new "open sector" of public schooling. In this new sector educators can implement reforms and innovations outside many of the constraints that limit the ability of their peers in traditional public schools to do so. The size, nature, and vitality of this open sector are measures of the success of the chartering strategy.

Together, the two evaluation elements provide a more complete picture of the chartered school movement in a state than is available today. Exploring one element in isolation provides a potentially misleading picture of the charter program and fails to address adequately the full intent or contribution of chartering and chartered schools to a state's education system. The evaluations that states produce using this model will also include recommendations that strengthen the performance of chartered schools and increase the power of the strategy of chartering to drive broader improvement.

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A MODEL REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
What Works in Chartered Schools &
How Can Chartering Improve Public Education?

Section I. Background

The state is requesting proposals for an evaluation of its chartered schools, the state's efforts to encourage, approve, support, and oversee these schools, and the effect of this program as a whole on public education. This RFP includes two sections. Section I provides background information describing the project's purpose and objectives. Section II describes the elements of a proposal, including: required elements; selection criteria; and the major research questions a winning evaluation must address.

This document also contains two appendices. Appendix A is a rubric that will be used to evaluate proposals submitted through this process. It includes information on how reviewers will judge each proposal's research design, management plan, organizational capacity, and budget. Appendix B presents a detailed outline of the research questions a successful evaluation will address.

Purpose

The evaluation will inform policymakers considering changes to the charter law or chartering policies and procedures, as well as changes to the public school system as a whole. Thus, the evaluation must provide conclusions about what is or is not working well in the state's current charter program as well as recommendations for changes to strategies and procedures for chartering schools and adjustments to education law.

Objectives

The evaluation will produce a report that presents and analyzes information on two key topics: chartered schools and chartering as a strategy to improve public education.

A. CHARTERED SCHOOLS

A final report will include the following information on chartered schools:

1. Types of educational programs they offer;
2. Organizational and administrative models and innovations present in the schools;
3. Resources they receive and patterns in their use;
4. Quality and depth of implementation of educational, organizational, and resource strategies and innovations;
5. Goals and standards the schools set for themselves and the measures they use and progress they make toward these; and
6. Effects of these strategies on student performance and other student outcomes.

A report will also use existing systems to gather data and report on the types of information included in earlier charter school evaluations, such as:

1. Numbers and location of operating schools and trends in chartered school growth; and
2. Number and characteristics of students that chartered schools serve.

This first section will do more than report on the scope and demographics of the chartered schools as a group. The evaluation must explain what individual chartered schools are doing and how these practices affect outcomes. The study will include information on all chartered schools, as well as intensive study of a representative sample of schools to examine their implementation of educational programs, organizational strategies, and resource use. It will also analyze the connections between these elements

and student outcomes, offering conclusions about which practices are most successful.

B. *CHARTERING AS A STRATEGY*

The section of the final report addressing the chartering strategy will include:

1. Numbers and types of charter authorizers and their activities to date;

2. Numbers and types of applicants for charters and the outcomes of their applications;

3. A review of the procedures and policies used to authorize charter schools;

4. In cases where different types of entities authorize charter schools in a single state, (e.g., a state where both school districts and state-level bodies can authorize schools) analysis of the differences between different types of authorizers and the charter applicants and schools they generate as well as analysis of the differences in their practices;

5. Financing mechanisms, including amounts, sources, and administration of funds;

6. Accountability systems used to measure and report on chartered schools' progress;

7. Strategies and policies used to encourage chartered schools, in the aggregate, to meet statewide goals for chartering;

8. Support structures available to schools in the state, their roles, and effectiveness. Possible structures to study include: charter authorizers, associations, resource centers, corporate and foundation partners, and traditional school districts;

9. Efforts to disseminate promising and effective strategies from successful chartered schools to new schools or existing schools in need of improvement;

10. Changes in traditional schools and school systems instituted in response to or based on experiences gained in the chartered schools; and

11. Effectiveness of chartering as a strategy for promoting an open sector of public education with a significant number of new schools that offer a variety of high-quality educational programs reaching a diverse student population.

Section II. Proposal Elements

Required Elements

A successful proposal will address each of the following elements:

1. Research design

2. Management plan and timeline

3. Organizational capacity, including related experience, resources, and qualifications of key personnel

4. Budget and budget narrative; and

5. *(Other elements as required by state law and procedure and those required by funders – see the footnote for examples).*[1]

Selection Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated according to their ability to demonstrate the following characteristics:

1. A high-quality research design. A high-quality research design will use valid and reliable methods to address as many questions from the attached list of research questions as possible, with appropriate prioritization. It will also generate final reports that are focused on questions of key importance to

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[1] *This model provides a starting point and framework for a full-blown request-for-proposals. Any state or funder using this model RFP will need to add language that reflects local procedures for administering grants and/or contracts and unique elements of the state's charter school law and program, including specific elements of evaluations that are required by state law, if applicable. It is assumed that states and other funders of evaluations will include information on matters such as the following: background of the state's chartered school initiative, including information on its charter school law; outcomes and/or goals codified in the state's charter school law for chartered schools and chartering (if available); timeline for development and delivery of a completed evaluation; proposal content requirements beyond the elements included in the model RFP; number of possible points awarded for each section of their proposal; instructions for application submission; review and approval process; compliance assurances; contractual terms; process for notification of awards.*

policymakers;

2. A sound management plan and timeline that can complete complex tasks like those outlined below and adjust as necessary;

3. A sound organization with the resources and demonstrated capacity to carry out the various forms of analysis required, including highly qualified leadership; and

4. An appropriate and justifiable budget.

In the proposal, the contractor should detail data gathering measures. The contractor will use multiple measures of school success, including:

1. Progress toward school-specific goals;

2. Scores from state- and district-mandated assessments;

3. Value-added analysis of test-score data to measure the effectiveness of schools;

4. Parent, student, and staff satisfaction surveys;

5. Secondary school student outcomes;

6. Comparable activity and performance in non-chartered schools; and

7. Data from school site visits.

Major Research Questions

The evaluation should address both elements of the RFP: the practices and effects of chartered schools as well as the practices and effects of chartering as a strategy. The study will address findings and conclusions for both elements. Finally, a set of recommendations will address all aspects of the program. A detailed list of topics and questions to be addressed by the ideal evaluation is included in Appendix B.

1) Chartered Schools
   a) Findings: What is happening in the chartered sector?
      i) Description of chartered schools and students
      ii) Educational approaches

      (1) What is being attempted?
      (2) What is innovative?
      (3) What is deliberately replicated?
      (4) How well or thoroughly are these innovations implemented?
      iii) Organizational and Leadership Innovation
      iv) Resources, including sources and patterns of use and allocation, including comparisons among chartered schools as well as to traditional public schools' use
   b) Conclusions:
      i) Which models and approaches are effective and promising?
      ii) What helps or hinders school success?
      iii) What shows the most promise for replication and dissemination?

2) Chartering as a Strategy
   a) Findings
      i) Authorizers and Authorizing:
         (1) Who is authorizing schools, how, and why?
         (2) What types of schools are authorizers authorizing (including comparisons of outcomes and practices for different types of authorizers -- if applicable)?
      ii) State law:
         (1) How does the state law affect schools and chartering?
         (2) How has it changed over time?
   b) Conclusions: Impact of chartering on chartered schools and on district response
      i) What impact do chartering strategies have on the chartered schools?
      ii) Are chartered schools and authorizer activities creating incentives for districts to respond?
      iii) Do districts report or perceive these incentives?

iv) How are districts responding to chartering?

v) Which incentives or authorizer activities produce the most positive response by districts?

3) Recommendations: How can the state improve chartered schools and chartering as a strategy?

a) Strengthening chartered schools

b) Improving chartering as a strategy to improve public education

Prioritizing Among the Research Questions

The questions and topics listed above and in Appendix B are exhaustive. Ideally, a full evaluation would address all elements. Financial resources or logistical issues may necessitate prioritization among these questions or a staged process.

To the extent that prioritization limits the scope of research, proposals should address questions about the activities and practices taking place in individual chartered schools and the effects of those strategies on student learning. Questions about the success or failure of chartered schools as a group are of less value and should be a lower priority. If full analysis of all schools on these questions is impossible, the evaluator should propose a viable sampling strategy.

While there is a logical appeal to focusing on chartered schools first, with subsequent research examining the larger impact of chartering as a strategy for improving public education in general, a proposal *must* contain some analysis of chartering as a strategy in order to be successful. The state (or funder) is particularly interested in the ways in which chartering as a strategy is and is not working, and so this part of the evaluation is essential.

It is important to recognize and leverage the lessons of the previous evaluations, and to focus subsequent efforts on remaining gaps. To the extent that proposed evaluations continue the analysis of the data gathering strategies from previous research, the new evaluations should add more analysis of the trends and they should seek to explain the evolution of the emerging open sector.

APPENDIX A
CHARTERED SCHOOLS EVALUATION REBRIC

Element I: **Research Design**   **/40**
Element II: **Management Plan and Timeline**   **/25**
Element III: **Organizational Capacity & Personal Qualifications**   **/25**
Element IV: **Budget and Budget Narrative**   **/10**

TOTAL POINTS	**___/100**

Overall Score: **____/100**

Element I: Research Design   40 points

A research design should include information on the evaluation's plans for data gathering, analysis and reporting. It should present a strategy for answering the full array of research questions included in Appendix A. The data gathering strategy should include an explanation of steps to minimize the impact of research activities on schools and practitioners.

The research design should include methods for gathering data that will inform analysis of all key areas, including innovation in educational programs, organization, governance, resource use and basic demographics. Potential evaluators will need to address strategies for selecting a representative sample of schools for intensive study, including the development of a typology of schools and system of selecting schools, and protocols for site visits and further study.

The data must also include comparison data on non-chartered schools, as well as measures allowing for value-added analysis and the use of multiple indicators of school progress. The research design must also outline planned analysis and reporting under the evaluation. A successful proposal will provide information on questions about the effectiveness of specific practices within chartered schools, and the dynamics that chartering and chartered schools bring to the state's public education system as a whole.

Research Design Rubric

Level I 0-3 points	Level II 4-6 points	Level III 7-10 points
▪ No steps to lessen impact of data gathering on practitioners	▪ Includes steps to lessen impact of data gathering on practitioners	▪ Minimizes impact of data gathering on practitioners
▪ Addresses small set of research questions	▪ Includes broad range of research questions	▪ Includes full range of research questions
▪ Analysis focused on chartered schools in the aggregate	▪ Includes plan to distinguish between types of schools	▪ Strong plan to distinguish types of schools and select representative sample for further study
▪ No plan for how to disaggregate types of chartered schools	▪ Documents presence of reforms	▪ Examines depth and quality of implementation and innovation of reforms
▪ Includes only state assessments data on school performance	▪ Includes multiple measures of school performance	▪ Includes all relevant data sources on school performance, including school specific goals and allowing for value-added analysis
▪ Little or no information on chartering activities or authorizers practices	▪ Includes data on chartering activities and authorizer practices, fails to analyze connection to outcomes	▪ Rich analysis of chartering activities, including resources, procedures, and outcomes
▪ Little or no information on charter friends groups and their role	▪ Includes some data and analysis of charter friends groups and their role	▪ Strong plan to document and evaluate the contribution of charter friends groups' role in the state's charter movement
▪ Little or no data on dynamics of charters that affect district-systems	▪ Includes data from transfers of students, personnel, and resources among chartered and non-chartered schools	▪ Evaluates relative importance of transfers of resources among chartered and non-chartered schools
▪ Little or no study of promising strategies or replication efforts	▪ Includes some analysis of promising strategies and replication efforts	▪ Strategies designed to identify promising strategies, replication strategies, or impact of these efforts
▪ Little or no baseline information on district practices	▪ Includes analysis of broader changes in public education system	▪ Analyzes effects of chartering strategies and elements of charted schools on district response and impact on public education system
▪ Inadequate information on data and analysis strategies	▪ Includes most necessary elements of data collection and basic description of analysis	▪ Includes extensive design and coherent description of strategies for analysis and reporting
		Total Points for Element _____

Comments:

Element II: Management Plan and Timeline   25 points

The management plan and timeline should demonstrate the feasibility of the proposed evaluation and the likelihood that the final reports will be completed on time and of a sufficient quality. Specific tasks and deliverables should be described in concrete terms to demonstrate the degree of quality control anticipated in the proposal and the likelihood that it will succeed. The plan should include basic information on the staff and other resources allocated for particular tasks.

Timelines should include enough flexibility to incorporate unanticipated obstacles and demonstrate knowledge of and ability to accommodate the school calendar and other logistical constraints as necessary. Ideally, expert peers, state officials, and program administrators will review designs and products. The timeline should reflect knowledge of available data and a familiarity with the tasks required to produce new data.

Management Plan and Timeline Rubric

Level I 0-3 points	Level II 4-6 points	Level III 7-10 points
▪ Deliverables not specified or inadequately described	▪ Basic information on all deliverables described	▪ Deliverables described in sufficient detail to facilitate oversight
▪ Fails to allow for outside review by state or peers	▪ Allows opportunities for some state or peer review of some design elements or products	▪ Allows for thorough state and peer review of design and products
▪ Timelines in conflict with school calendars	▪ Timelines generally in line with school calendars	▪ Timelines cognizant of and accommodate school calendars, including assessment and reporting schedules
▪ Reflects of lack of familiarity with available data or issues currently lacking data	▪ Reflects partial knowledge of available data and gaps in current data	▪ Reflects thorough knowledge of available data and areas where new data must be generated
▪ Fails to describe allocation of resources, or allocations are inappropriate for various tasks	▪ Offers information on anticipated resources for specific tasks, but some allocations appear inadequate or inappropriate	▪ Allocates appropriate resources, staff and otherwise, for specific tasks
▪ Timeline fails to include flexibility for unanticipated obstacles	▪ Includes some flexibility for unanticipated obstacles	▪ Plan indicates a resilient and reliable structure for succeeding despite unanticipated obstacles.
		Total Points for Element _____

Comments:

Element III: Organizational Capacity & Personnel Qualifications 25 points

Proposals should provide information on the capacity of the organization(s) engaged in the research as well as the qualifications of key personnel. Discussion of organizational capacity should include a demonstrated record of accomplishment on evaluations of a similar scale or scope; or in the absence of such experience, a explanation of the resources available to the organization. Ideally, the organization will have successfully completed evaluations using similar methods and forms of analysis -- including value-added assessments. Information on key personnel should include information on previous research and evaluation as well as management responsibility for projects of similar scale or scope.

Organizational Capacity & Personnel Qualifications Rubric

| Level I
0-3 points | Level II
4-6 points | Level III
7-10 points |
|---|---|---|
| ▪ Unclear whether organization(s) have capacity, no demonstrated record. | ▪ Organization(s) have capacity to complete evaluations of this scope and scale, but no experience. | ▪ Organization(s) have demonstrated capacity to complete evaluations of similar scope and scale. |
| ▪ Organization(s) have not used methods or forms of analysis required for this evaluation. | ▪ Organization(s) have used many of the methods and forms of analysis required for this evaluation. | ▪ Organization(s) have used all of the methods and forms of analysis required for this evaluation. |
| ▪ Key personnel are not identified, or lack appropriate experience and skills. | ▪ Key personnel are identified, and have some relevant experience. | ▪ Key personnel are identified and have relevant research and management experience. |
| ▪ Not clear whether the team working on this project has, or can call on, individuals with all areas of expertise required to complete this evaluation. | ▪ Team working on this project includes individuals with expertise in several of the areas required to complete this project. | ▪ Team includes or can draw on a variety of personnel for almost all the different tasks and skills required. |
| | | **Total Points for Element** _____ |

Comments:

10

Element IV: Budget & Budget Narrative   10 points

The budget and budget narrative will be evaluated for adequacy and transparency. This section will allow the reviewers to judge the cost of the project and also provide insight into the planning and priorities for the project.

Budget & Budget Narrative Rubric

Level I 0-3 points	Level II 4-6 points	Level III 7-10 points
▪ Cost is excessive or inadequate for the scope of work proposed.	▪ Cost is reasonable for the scope of work proposed.	▪ Cost is appropriate and adequate for work proposed.
▪ Budget narrative does not provide clarity on the use of resources.	▪ Budget narrative provides some transparency for the proposed use of funds.	▪ Proposed use of funding is clear and budget and budget narrative allow for oversight and management of project completion.
▪ Budget priorities do not match proposed work or degree of match cannot be determined from proposal.	▪ Budget priorities match most of the proposed work, with minor exceptions.	▪ Budget priorities match the proposed work.
		Total Points for Element _____

Comments:

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APPENDIX B
KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Questions

The evaluation should address both elements of the RFP: the practices and effects of chartered schools as well as the practices and effects of chartering as a strategy. The study will address findings and conclusions for each element. Finally, a set of recommendations will address all aspects of the program. A detailed list of topics and questions to be addressed by the ideal evaluation follows.

1) Chartered Schools

a) **Findings: What is happening in chartered schools?**
This part of the evaluation would describe the operating chartered schools and their students, including an analysis of their target populations, learning programs, governance and management, and resource use. It is assumed the evaluator will catalogue the state's schools, design a typology that characterizes them, and then determine a protocol for choosing a representative sample from among the various types of schools in the state for more intensive study. A successful proposal will include a research design that can make such selections and effectively address the following topics and questions.

i) **Description of chartered schools and students**
   (1) How many chartered schools are operating?
   (2) How many have opened and closed?
   (3) Where are schools located, and what is the distribution of schools within the state?
   (4) Whom are schools targeting, and what are the schools' chosen missions?
   (5) What are the demographic characteristics of charter schools, including numbers and distribution of students attending chartered schools, using all subgroups used to disaggregate progress under federal law? Analysis should include:
      (a) Race and ethnicity
      (b) Gender
      (c) Disability
      (d) Language
      (e) Family income
      (f) Academic performance prior to enrolling in the chartered school
   (6) What is the role of charter schools in serving students with the highest academic needs?
   (7) Do the students with the highest needs have educational choices through chartered schools; and why are students with the highest academic needs choosing chartered schools?

ii) **Educational Approaches**
   (1) What educational approaches or models are the different chartered schools using?
   (2) What is the quality and depth of implementation of models in schools that use national or other pre-established models?
   (3) Are there instances of innovative practices in chartered schools, and if so what are they?
   (4) How have chartered schools sought to change or shape school culture? (Descriptions of efforts to improve student learning by first improving students' motivation, and differences in the way adults and students interact.);
   (5) What methods and forms of assessment of student learning are being used?
   (6) How are chartered schools using technology?
   (7) For questions 1 through 6, what are the differences between chartered and district schools?

iii) **Organizational and Leadership Innovation**
   (1) What new forms of school governance, organization, and school administration are chartered schools using?
   (2) What are the differences in organization and governance between chartered schools and district-run schools?
   (3) What are the changes or innovations in school leadership, and governance (e.g., teacher-ownership, co-principals, etc.)?
   (4) What is the makeup of governing boards for chartered schools?
   (5) How effective are these boards?

iv) **Resources**
   (1) Do chartered schools have access to all funding sources available in traditional public school systems?
   (2) What are the sources and amounts of financing for chartered schools?
   (3) Do chartered schools receive flexibility and innovation in the use of funding?
   (4) Are adequate and equitable resources available for specific purposes, (e.g., operating funds, assistance with capital)?

(5) What are the chartered schools' practices regarding the selection and use of contractors?

(6) What services do chartered schools purchase and from whom (e.g., curricula, management)?

(7) How are contracts negotiated, managed, and overseen?

(8) How do patterns of resource-use vary among chartered schools?

(9) Are there different patterns of expenditure visible in the chartered schools as compared to district schools?
    (a) What are those different patterns?
    (b) What proportion of the budget is allocated to learning?
    (c) To teachers?
    (d) To administration?

b) Conclusions: Which chartered schools are succeeding best? At what, and why?
  i) **Effectiveness and promise of models and approaches**
    (1) Using a variety of outcomes measures, including assessment data, and value-added assessments, what evidence is there of success in chartered schools among the following types of schools:
      (a) in various types of chartered schools, with different organizational and governing relationships (e.g., converted existing private and public schools, or newly created schools or those contracting with management companies);
      (b) in schools serving various student populations; and
      (c) in schools following specific approaches to teaching and learning?

  ii) **What do chartered school operators, authorizers, and the evaluators believe is helping or hindering the chartered schools' success?**
    (1) Which educational programs and innovations produce increased student learning? Are there some that appear unsuccessful?
    (2) Do chartered schools receive significant autonomy?
    (3) Do chartered schools receive enough resources (e.g., 100% operating funds, assistance with facilities financing)?
    (4) What, and how important, are the effects of changed patterns of expenditure?

(5) What outside resources and supporting partnerships do chartered schools rely on? Which are most helpful?

(6) Which elements of successful schools cause that success and why? What attributes are hindering progress?

(7) What about the schools' charter status under this state's law helps or hinders their efforts to implement proven or effective strategies? To create truly innovative practices?

  iii) **What shows the most promise for replication and dissemination?**
    (1) What are the most promising strategies for pedagogy, governance, leadership, and resource use in charter schools?
    (2) Which of these strategies could be effectively implemented on a larger scale? How?

2) Chartering as a Strategy

a) Findings
  i) **Authorizers and Authorizing: Who is authorizing schools, how, and why?**
    (1) What entities are eligible to grant charters?
    (2) Which charter authorizers are actively granting charters?
    (3) What trends appear in chartering over time?
    (4) If there are eligible authorizers unwilling or reluctant to grant charters, what affects their decisions to participate?
    (5) What resources do charter authorizers have to carry out their tasks?
    (6) How do they gather these resources?
    (7) What changes have authorizers made in their policies and procedures?
    (8) Do authorizers meet to share experiences?

  ii) **Organizations and Cooperative Strategies**
    (1) What entities are helping to support chartering or chartered schools?
      (a) What organizing strategies or partnerships are being used?
      (b) Where are the resources supporting this work coming from?
      (c) What differences are there between the activities and outcomes of these different strategies?
    (2) What are the perceptions of the quality and utility of these organizations among chartered school operators and authorizers?

(3) How are these entities governed, or who decides what work or strategies they will pursue?

iii) State law

(1) According to school operators, authorizers, and the evaluators, how does the state's charter school law affect the work of schools and authorizers?
(2) Does the law encourage the creation of chartered schools?
(3) How is the law changing over time?

b) Conclusions: Impact of chartering on chartered schools and on district response

i) Impact of chartering strategies on the chartered schools

(1) Are there patterns in the types of charter proposals gaining approval? (Are there patterns in the academic programs, organizational strategies, governance systems, or resource use among approved schools?)
(2) If there are different types of charter authorizers (districts and non-district authorizers for example) are there differences in the types of schools different authorizers choose to authorize?
(3) Are charters being revoked prior to the end of the charter period, or renewed or not renewed at the ends of the charter period, and for what reasons?
(4) Beyond attributes of the charter authorizers and their practices, do other state policies -- like finance, regulation, or accountability -- affect the types of schools being chartered or the populations they serve?
(5) Is the state empowering enough different authorizers to grant charters?

ii) Are chartered schools and authorizer activities creating incentives for districts to respond?

(1) Are students moving from district-run to chartered schools? If so, to which types of chartered schools, how many students are moving and are there patterns in the types of students choosing new schools?
(2) What is the public response to, and attitudes about, the chartered schools in the aggregate and to different types of chartered schools? How do parents, local teachers, administrators, school board members, or other community leaders view the chartered sector?

(3) How does money move from the state, to the district, to the chartered schools?
(4) Are teachers and principals moving between chartered and non-chartered schools?
(5) What are the attributes and qualities of the teachers and principals in the different sectors?

iii) How are districts responding to chartering?

(1) How are districts responding to chartering?
(2) Do districts try to block the creation of new schools and to amend the charter law or to frustrate its administration? If so, how?
(3) Do districts adapt their own schools and their learning programs?
(4) Do districts create new schools of their own modeled on successful or popular chartered schools?
(5) What aspects of the state's chartering program discourage or help districts to respond positively?
(6) Do different types of chartered schools affect districts differently?
(7) Are there aspects of chartered school programs that are more likely to produce positive responses by districts?
(8) How are innovations disseminated or replicated?
(9) Who is currently responsible for, or active in, dissemination and replication? Are they capable of succeeding?
(10) What efforts, if any, are districts taking to learn about and/or emulate practices used in chartered schools?

3) Recommendations: How to improve chartered schools and chartering as a strategy

Using the findings and conclusions of the study, the contractor would recommend actions by policymakers and others to improve chartered schools and increase their positive impact on state education systems.

Recommendations should be addressed to chartered school operators and founders, those authorized to sponsor new schools, those in charge of the district, the state department of education (or whatever state-level entity has jurisdiction over chartered schools), charter school support organizations, and the Legislature. Recommendations can

include changes in law, regulation, or guidance, as well as strategies for facilitating change by different levels of government, as well as other community resources. The recommendations should address each of the major elements of the evaluation, focusing on the following:

a) **Strengthening Chartered Schools and Related Organizations**
   i) What would increase the rate at which new high-quality schools are created?
   ii) What would increase the use of effective strategies in chartered schools?
   iii) What would increase the degree, quality, and diversity of innovation?
   iv) What would increase the ability and likelihood of chartered schools to serve all populations, including general populations as well as targeted groups of students?
   v) What would improve, or increase the use of, effective governance and managerial arrangements?

   vi) What types of organizations and/or cooperative strategies are helping, or could help, schools meet of these challenges?

b) **Improving Chartering as a Strategy to Improve Public Education**
   i) What changes would help the state generate the types, numbers, and distribution of chartered schools they seek?
   ii) What would encourage or help charter authorizers to improve their practices?
   iii) What would generate more incentives for districts to respond?
   iv) What actions would minimize the incentives for, and ability of, districts to respond to chartered schools in a hostile or negative manner?
   v) What resources could help support and increase the size and success of an open sector of public schools generally – including both chartered and non-chartered schools?

ABOUT EDUCATION|EVOLVING

Millions of America's students head off to school each morning sporting brightly colored backpacks and determined to make this their "best school year yet." At the same time, federal and state policymakers are making tough new demands that our schools change and improve – so that "All students learn at high levels." New standards, tests, timelines and consequences are all being put in place to make sure that "No child is left behind."

Yet, all across the country, many policymakers, journalists, teachers, parents and students themselves are troubled by a haunting feeling that all this effort may not really produce the degree of change and improvement that we need. At a minimum, we are now taking a series of risks that are neither wise nor necessary to be making with other people's children. These are, after all, demands and results well-beyond what we've ever expected of American public education – all at a time of severe budgetary pressures on states, districts and individual public schools.

That, at least is the serious concern of a small group of Minnesota-based public policy veterans who have come together as Education|Evolving… a joint venture of the Center for Policy Studies and Hamline University. The individuals behind this initiative believe…

… it's an unwise and unnecessary risk for the state and nation to be trying to get the results we need solely by changing the schools we now have…

… the issues about teachers and teaching should not be debated only in the old employer/worker framework…

… the solution to maintaining financially viable public education in rural areas may not lie in the three old 'solutions' of excess levies, consolidation and state aid…

… today's schools should not go on largely failing to take advantage of new electronic technologies and other substantially different ways of teaching and learning…

… and the critical discussion about the future of K-12 education in Minnesota and nationally must not proceed solely as a discussion among adults, with students largely left on the outside looking in.

Education|Evolving is undertaking a number of initiatives during the current year. They include a national initiative to convince policy makers, education reform leaders, journalists and others that *creating new schools* should be an essential element in achieving needed changes and improvements in teaching and learning – at least equal in importance to *changing the schools we now have*.

One focus of this initiative is to introduce the concept of an "*Open Sector*" – to help create the kind of legal and political environments in which new schools can be created and succeed. Another is designed to challenge the fundamental premise that teachers in schools must always be "employees." Another initiative – including this RFP – is looking at the premises used in asking the critical question, "How are chartered schools doing?" Other ongoing Education|Evolving projects focus on strengthening and enhancing the role of the agencies and organizations that sponsor chartered schools – and on how policymakers, journalists and others can more routinely and substantively tap into the experiences and perspectives of students and of young people not now attending school.

Education|Evolving's leadership is provided by two Minnesota public policy veterans: **Ted Kolderie**, senior associate at the Center for Policy Studies, and **Joe Graba**, a senior policy fellow at Hamline University. Its coordinator is **Jon Schroeder**, former director of Charter Friends National Network.

Education|Evolving's activities are regularly updated on the initiative's new and unique web site – **www.educationevolving.org**. To receive print and electronic updates of Education|Evolving initiatives, contact **info@educationevolving.org.**

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education|evolving

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