



MINNESOTA SPONSOR ASSISTANCE NETWORK

An initiative of Education|Evolving with support from the Minnesota Department of Education

Sponsoring Chartered Schools: A Planning Tool for Sponsors

The purpose of this "Planning Tool" is to assist sponsors of chartered schools better understand their responsibilities and determine the areas in which they may want to improve how they perform specific functions. For further explanation of the areas addressed below, refer to the document titled, "Sponsoring Chartered Schools: A Resource Guide for Minnesota Chartering Agencies." The following document is a screening tool. Sponsors should have competent processes in place for each of these "Sponsoring Functions."

SPECIAL NOTE: THIS DOCUMENT IS IN DRAFT FORM AND COMMENTS WOULD BE HELPFUL.

Sponsor Name: _____ Contact Person: _____
Sponsor Address: _____ Contact Person Phone: _____
_____ Contact Person E-Mail: _____

Year Sponsor began sponsoring: _____ Number of Schools Chartered: _____

List or attach a list of the schools granted charters from this sponsor:

SPONSOR FUNCTION	IS THIS A NEED	NOTES OR COMMENTS	RESOURCES TO CONSIDER
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I. Sponsoring Agency Capacity and Infrastructure

A. Sponsoring Eligibility

The organization is an eligible sponsor.

B. Making the Decision to Sponsor

1. The sponsor has identified how sponsoring is consistent with its own mission.

2. The sponsor has the organizational commitment to be a sponsor at the board or senior management level.

3. The sponsor has the resources in the following areas to be a quality sponsor. These resources may be internal or obtained from other sources. (this should be specified)

- a. Person(s) that understand the sponsor role and can serve as the charter coordinator
- b. Personnel with finance expertise in education
- c. Personnel with knowledge of education programs/models
- d. Personnel with evaluation expertise

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- e. Personnel with legal expertise
- f. Adequate time is allocated for each of the above.

4. The sponsor has identified the financial resources it needs to serve as a sponsor.

5. The sponsor has a long-term commitment to serve as a sponsor (at least 5 years).

6. The sponsor has determined the types of schools it intends to sponsor:

- a. Operator designed models
- b. Sponsor designed models
- c. Both “a” and “b”

7. The sponsor requires the schools it intends to charter to:

- a. Have a research base
- b. Have a “promising practices” base
- c. Have an experimental basis to further research particular models
- d. other/any of the above

D. Sponsors Internal Process

1. The sponsor has written procedures as to how it will implement the sponsoring functions.
2. These procedures address each area of the sponsors responsibilities in this “Needs Assessment.”
3. If the process draws on multiple resources in the sponsors organization, each section in the organization is committed and able to perform their designed role.
4. If the process draws on resources outside of the sponsoring agency, those agreements are in place.

E. Informing Potential Operators

1. The sponsor has communicated its willingness to serve as a sponsor.
2. This process includes low-income families and communities and students of color.
3. A written summary of the sponsor’s criteria and process is available.

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II. Reviewing applications for sponsorship

A. The sponsor must have the capability to review the application and to assist the proposed operator to improve the application.

1. The sponsors personnel are prepared to carryout their role. i.e. attended training, have the necessary background in education, finance, evaluation, etc.

B. Application development, review and communication for a sponsor initiated model (Note: This should be addressed where applicable)

1. The sponsor has developed a specific model or models which it wants to sponsor?
2. If so, will “Request for Proposal’s (RFP)” process be used or how will this operate
3. The application development and review process is developed and skilled persons assigned for review, comment and assistance.

C. The sponsor has a written process for reviewing applications. This process includes at a minimum:

1. Pre-application phase
 - a. Meetings with the proposed operator to explain sponsors criteria for sponsoring
 - b. Determine early in the process if the model to be proposed will be considered by the sponsor.
 - c. The sponsor determines whether the operator is able to fulfill that role i.e. education/training/experience, criminal background check conducted.
2. The application review process addresses how the application meets the following at a minimum (See MDE requirements):
 - a. Requirements of the law
 - b. Requirements of the sponsor
 - c. Requirements of the commissioner that may extend beyond (1) and (2)
 - d. Examination of operator leadership Capability
 - e. Does the application have a clear sense of purpose
 - f. Is the program design competent
 - g. Is there a competent evaluation design developed that includes a “value-added growth model”

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- h. Is the governance structure sound including a board with the capability to provide policy leadership
- i. Is the financial plan complete
- j. Other sponsor requirements
 - (1) School is an approved non-Profit in Minnesota
 - (2) Criminal background checks on the operator and board

D. Making the decision to sponsor

1. A process is developed so that the sponsor is certain the application clearly meets all of the state and sponsor requirements without question.
2. It is clear as to whom in the sponsoring agency has the authority to make a sponsoring decision.
3. Both an oral and written presentation are made to the sponsor (may be several)
4. The criteria for approval is clear so that only applications that clearly meet or exceed the sponsors criteria are accepted and submitted to the commissioner.
5. The sponsoring decision is timely to allow for State review.
6. If the sponsor is a district board, its process includes statutory timelines not applicable to other sponsors.

E. Commissioner approval of sponsor request

1. The submission of the application to the state should be a joint written communication from the sponsor and developer. Sponsor should specifically state its intent to grant a charter
2. Sponsor should have substantial involvement in the meeting and clearly communicate its decision to grant a charter pending commissioner approval of the sponsor's intent.

III. Performance Contract

A. The contract must include:

1. All statutory provisions
2. "No Child Left Behind" compliance assurance
3. Sponsor requirements
4. Initial year requirements
5. Annual report requirements

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6. Sponsor oversight plan
7. Assistance to be provided pro-bono (not those included in "B" below)
8. Renewal process and criteria
9. Fees of sponsorship

B. A separate "services agreement" contract should be prepared for the services (if any) the sponsor will be providing for a fee.

IV. Oversight and Evaluation

- A. A plan for the initial/planning year is developed? *Refer to: "Planning Year Oversight Process"*
- B. For the year in which the school opens, An expanded oversight plan reflective of the "operational" status is developed. *Refer to: "Initial Year Oversight Process"*
- C. For subsequent years, the oversight plan includes student performance data.
- D. For the renewal year, provisions unique to this decision are included in the oversight plan.
- E. For post-renewal years, assuming the school is meeting the needs of students consistent with the contract, a modified oversight plan may be warranted
- F. As part of the oversight plan, a process is included for sponsor addressing concerns identified by parents, teachers, etc.

The following should be included in A-E above (See Planning Year Oversight. This is applicable for each year.

1. Governance (board) review
2. Program is being developed/implemented consistent with the charter mission that was approved by the sponsor
3. Financial Oversight
4. Management oversight
5. General compliance evidence i.e. licensure, facilities, etc.
6. Annual Report (See Evaluation Design)

V. Renewal Decision-Making

- A. The renewal of the contract must occur every three years at a minimum. It may be more frequent.
1. The renewal process should be designed so the sponsor is able to make the following decisions:
 - a. The school is being operated consistent with its mission
 - b. Students are performing consistent with expectations of the contract
 - c. The school is a financially viable organization
 - d. It is in compliance with state, federal and sponsor requirements
 2. A timeline for submission of all data, on site reviews, meetings with parents et al is set so that renewal decisions can be made not later than March 1 of the final year of the contract.
 3. The review includes information in each of the areas specified above.
 4. A draft of the written report/findings is reviewed with the school prior to it being finalized.
 5. A draft of the report is filed with the commissioner for review and comment prior to the report becoming final.
 6. After the state review and comment, a final report is provided to the school.
- B. **Decisions to terminate/not renew the contract.**
The sponsor process should include:
- a. Process for terminating during the term of the contract for program, student performance or fiscal reasons.
 - b. Process for terminating at the end of the contract for for program, student performance or fiscal reasons.
 - c. Process for non-renewal after three years initiated by either the sponsor or board or the operator.
 - d. A process has been developed for addressing appeals of the termination decisions. (Note: district board sponsors need to include appeals to the commissioner)