



Friends of Education
Commissioner-Approved Authorizing Plan
Effective July 30, 2015

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Friends of Education Part A Measures: Authorizer Capacity and Infrastructure

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

Essential Elements:

- The mission is stated and fully aligns with Minnesota charter school law
 - The response includes a description of how the process of chartering schools is a way for the organization to carry out its mission.
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Mission:

Friends of Education is a Minnesota non-profit whose mission is: *to improve the education of children.* Friends of Education’s mission directs all of its activities: its charter school mission is to improve the education of children through quality authorization of charter schools.

Mission Alignment with Minnesota Charter School Law:

Friends of Education’s mission is compelling for charter school authorization because it is fully aligned with Minnesota’s primary statutory purpose for charter school establishment: *to improve all pupil learning and all student achievement*, see Minn. Stat. 124D.10 Subd. 1(a).

How Chartering Furthers Mission:

After supporting the implementation of a content-based learning program in an impoverished school, the students’ proficiency on state standards assessments went from 20% to 80% within a year. Friends of Education was compelled by these results to become an authorizer of quality public charter schools to further its reach in improving the education of children.

Measure A.2 - Authorizer Vision and Organizational Goals: *The authorizer has a comprehensive vision for charter school authorizing with clear organizational goals and time frames for achievement that are aligned with the purposes of Minnesota law.*

Essential Elements:

- The authorizer’s vision addresses, with specificity, the desired characteristics of the schools it will charter
 - The authorizer’s vision includes organization-specific purposes, if applicable.
 - The authorizer’s organizational goals aligns with chartering vision and statutory purpose(s) per Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.10, Subdivision 1(a)
 - The organizational goals are measurable.
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Vision & Desired School Characteristics:

Friends of Education’s vision is:

Through a system of business-based accountability measures, establish a network of high-quality charter schools which implement a content-based learning program and achieve better results than resident district and state average performance.

Friends of Education’s vision for authorizing charter schools is specifically aligned with the statutory primary purpose for chartering schools: “to improve all pupil learning and all student achievement,”

Minn. Stat. 124D.10 Subd. 1. Moreover, its organizational goals further its vision and the statutory primary purpose through seeking to:

- improve pupil learning by increasing school performance, and
- improve **all** pupil learning by increasing school subgroup performance and by increasing disadvantaged students served and by increasing the portfolio.

Friends of Education’s organizational goals include:

1. Increase School Performance:

- Portfolio proficiency achievement rate annually exceeds state average proficiency achievement rate for all students on state assessments.
- Average portfolio growth rate z-score annually exceeds state average growth z-score on state assessments.
- At least 80% of individual school performance annually exceeds resident district performance in either proficiency on state assessments or resident district average MMR or FR.
- At least 50% of individual school performance rates on state assessments exceed performance of either Edina, Orono, or Wayzata districts for the majority of reportable subgroups in the charter school.

2. Increasing the portfolio size while maintaining quality:

- Actively solicit broad range of content-rich models, including IB and standards-based
- Differentiate application process for proven models while maintaining quality evaluation

3. Increase Disadvantaged Children Served

- Advocate for and obtain passage of legislative amendment to allow enrollment preference for disadvantaged students.

Measure A.3 - Authorizer Structure of Operations and
Measure A.4 - Authorizer Staff Expertise: *The authorizer has a clear structure of duties and responsibilities and sufficient resources to effectively oversee its portfolio of charter schools. The authorizer has appropriate experience, expertise and skills to sufficiently oversee the portfolio of charter schools.*

Definitions:

- **Expertise** is defined as having knowledge, education, training, etc. in the areas of charter schools, curriculum, instruction, management, facilities, finance and law
- **Experience** is defined as length of time working in the areas of charter schools, curriculum, instruction, management, facilities, finance and law
- **Skills** is defined as effective application of experience and expertise in the areas of charter schools, curriculum, instruction, management, facilities, finance and law

Essential Elements:

- Description of the capacity of the organization to serve as an authorizer, including the positions (e.g. employees, contractors, volunteers; both paid and unpaid positions) who will perform the authorizing duties and ratio of positions (FTE) to portfolio size

- The authorizer describes a clear structure of duties and responsibilities, including required expertise, experience and skills in curriculum, instruction, management, facilities, finance and law in charter schools, at a level adequate to meet the needs of the portfolio
 - The authorizer describes how the organization will manage and safeguard information and records related to authorizing
 - An organizational chart that shows clear lines of reporting and authority/decision-making and, if applicable, showing projected organizational changes due to proposed expansion over the next five-year term.
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Authorizing Positions:

Friends of Education employs 2.5 staff FTEs and contracts with external resources/consultants at a minimum of 0.4 FTEs annually to provide oversight in all required areas.

Ratio of FTE Positions to Portfolio Size:

The staff + external resources (2.9 FTE) ratio to schools in portfolio (16 schools) is 1 : 5.5. Any future increases in portfolio size will result in increases to FTE resources to maintain a comparable ratio.

Structure:

The 2.5 staff FTE consists of an Executive Director, two assistants, and an Education Program Specialist. The Executive Director reports to the Board; remaining internal staff and all external resources/consultants report to the Executive Director. Collectively, Friends of Education’s current staff and external FTE resources possess the experience, expertise, and skills as identified in the chart below.

Expertise, Experience, Skills:

Topic	Experience, Expertise, Skills possessed by:
Charter schools	2 staff; 2 external resources/consultants
Curriculum	4 external resources/consultants
Instruction	1 staff; 3 external resources/consultants
Management	1 staff; 3 external resources/consultants
Facilities	1 staff; 3 external resources/consultants
Finance	3 staff; 2 external resources/consultants
Law	1 staff; 2 external resources/consultants

Note: the individual FTEs in each category are as of July 2015 and is subject to change. Regardless of individual FTE changes, however, Friends of Education is committed to maintaining experience, expertise, and skills in each category and will retain FTEs necessary to do so.

Manage & Safeguard Data:

Friends of Education enjoys considerable support from TCF Financial Corporation, an \$18 billion national bank holding company. Consequently, Friends of Education enjoys state-of-the art data management and information security. Some of the data management protocols include:

- individuals obtain access to specific data drives, limited to what they need to have access in order to fulfill their job responsibilities; consequently, information and data is reviewed only by those who have a need to know;
- multi-layer threat analysis to detect outside attempts to access data,
- encryption technology when data is transferred.

In addition, Friends of Education also enjoys TCF's business continuity protocols. These protocols ensure:

- all data is backed-up a minimum of every 24 hours,
- data-replication technologies move data to off-site locations at regular intervals,
- testing program whereby viability of the recovery is verified,
- third-party contracts for alternative work space.

Together, these protocols ensure information security and business continuity.

Organizational Chart:

See Organizational Chart, Charter School Program Guide, p 29, which identifies responsibilities and decision-making authority. Any future increases in portfolio size will result in increases to internal or external resources to maintain a comparable FTE to portfolio ratio as identified above.

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

Essential Elements

- The authorizer describes a plan to offer professional development to authorizing leadership and staff
 - The authorizer describes the frequency and nature of potential professional development as well as personnel expected to attend
 - The authorizer describes how the professional development aligns with its operations, vision and goals for the portfolio of charter schools
-

Plan:

Friends of Education provides professional development to its staff in three core areas:

- Authorizer practices
- School operations
- Student achievement

The professional development builds knowledge base and may also be proactive (e.g. implementing a new statutory requirement) or reactive (e.g. responding to issues known to exist in one or more schools.)

Friends of Education provides the professional development through three avenues:

1. attending specific, mission-aligned workshops, conferences and training in the state and around the nation,
2. bringing in experts from within the state and around the nation to deliver high-quality professional development, and/or
3. sponsoring regular professional development workshops where its staff learn from one another as well as local school experts.

Frequency, Nature, Personnel Expected to Attend:

Leadership and each staff is required to attend at least one professional development annually and any other development opportunities that leadership may require. Leadership and each staff have the opportunity (paid by Friends of Education) to attend one national professional development (e.g. NACSA, National Charter School conferences) annually.

How Professional Development Aligns with Operations, Vision and Goals:

Friends of Education provides professional development in order to:

- Inform and enhance its authorizing practices
- Better understand school operational requirements, which we believe leads to more effective oversight, and
- Fundamentally, the primary purpose of charter schools is to improve all pupil learning and all student achievement; accordingly, we believe that we, as an authorizer, need to continually better understand and recognize those key components which drive student achievement.

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

Essential Elements:

- Anticipated five-year budget (SYFY 16 – SYFY 20) outlining the following:
 - o Anticipated revenue sources such as fees collected annually from schools and additional funds from outside sources
 - o Anticipated expenditures such as staff, travel, consultants and office costs
 - o Anticipated authorizer staff increases in relation to portfolio growth
- The budget projects the number and size of schools in the portfolio

Important note: this establishes the maximum portfolio size for the authorizer’s next five-year term

Advanced Element:

- The authorizer describes how its budget shows resource allocations are devoted to achieve nationally recognized quality authorizing standards
-

The budget is included as A.6 Budget. The budget is a five-year projection and, necessarily, requires flexibility. For example, Friends of Education cannot predict what staffing costs will be in five years. Nonetheless, Friends of Education believes that its budget reflects reasonable income and expenditure projections.

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

Essential Elements:

- Clear policy to address conflicts of interest in all decision-making processes concerning the portfolio of charter schools
 - The authorizer describes how the policy will be implemented (forms, process, etc.) in order to avoid conflicts of interest that might affect the authorizer’s capacity to make objective, merit-based application and renewal decisions, including avoiding decisions and interventions that hold the authorizer accountable for the school’s performance
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Policy:

Friends of Education’s policy with respect to conflicts of interest exists in two forms:

- (1) its charter contract, and
- (2) its policy specific to conflicts of interest.

Charter Contract.

- Section 2.2 states the independent status of schools and that Friends of Education has no authority to control the operational, administrative and financial responsibilities of the school except those stated in the contract which comply with state statutes.
- Section 2.3 further confirms the separation of financial obligations of Friends and its schools.
- Section 2.4 clarifies that neither Friends nor its school can obligate the other into contracts.

Section 11.1(a)1 states that renewal (accountability) is based on school performance, specifically whether the school has improved all pupil learning and all student achievement (outcomes).

Policy:

Friends of Education’s policy on school conflicts of interest was passed in August 2010 and is explained in the Charter School Program Guide, p 26. The policy sets forth several prohibitions, including: Friends of Education personnel do not participate in any decision-making at an authorized school, and Friends of Education personnel do not work in any capacity at a charter school. The policy also requires objective, merit-based decisions in all aspects of charter school oversight.

Due to the inherent relationship between conflicts of interest and school autonomy, several concepts are inter-related. For example, Friends of Education’s policy on school autonomy, p 27, states in part, Friends of Education monitors and evaluates school performance and takes no action making it responsible for school performance.

How Policy is Implemented:

Friends of Education requires full disclosure of any potential or perceived conflicts of interest between reviewers or decision makers and applicants or schools. Written instructions are provided to all reviewers and decision-makers in advance of their participation in the review or decision, and individual confirmation obtained. In addition, Friends of Education reminds staff and external consultants of the Conflicts of Interest policy on at least an annual basis.

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

Essential Elements:

- The authorizer describes a clear policy to ensure school autonomy
- The authorizer describes processes and procedures for implementing and executing school autonomy
- The authorizer describes a focus on holding schools accountable for outcomes rather than on processes

Advanced Element:

- The authorizer describes how its policy to ensure school autonomy aligns with nationally recognized quality authorizing principles and standards
-

Policy:

Friends of Education’s policy with respect to school autonomy exists in two forms:

- (1) its charter contract, and
- (2) its policy specific to school autonomy.

Charter Contract.

- Section 2.2 states the independent status of schools and that Friends of Education has no authority to control the operational, administrative and financial responsibilities of the school except those stated in the contract which comply with state statutes.
- Section 2.3 further confirms the separation of financial obligations of Friends and its schools.
- Section 2.4 clarifies that neither Friends nor its school can obligate the other into contracts.
Section 11.1(a)1 states that renewal (accountability) is based on school performance, specifically whether the school has improved all pupil learning and all student achievement (outcomes).

Policy:

Due to the inherent relationship between conflicts of interest and autonomy, Friends of Education’s policy on school autonomy was passed in August 2010 in conjunction with its conflicts of interest policy and is explained in the Charter School Program Guide, p 27. The policy sets forth several guiding principles, including: Friends of Education does not manage or operate schools, Friends of Education personnel are prohibited from participating in decision-making at an authorized school, Friends of Education personnel are prohibited from performing work at an authorized school, technical assistance offered by Friends of Education is voluntary, and Friends of Education makes merit-based decisions.

In addition, Friends of Education strives to minimize burdens on charter schools in conducting oversight; in furtherance of this guiding principle, Friends of Education has adopted a risk-based approach to oversight and waives reporting obligations for well-managed schools (see discussion under B.5).

Processes and Procedures:

Friends of Education promotes and ensures school autonomy through:

- Regularly reminding Friends of Education FTEs of the guiding principles
- Refusing invitations to participate in school hiring decisions
- Providing, but not requiring schools to utilize, technical assistance
- Clearly identifying required versus recommended actions in communications.

Friends of Education holds Schools Accountable for Outcomes rather than Processes:

Friends of Education's policy on school autonomy, reflected in the Charter School Program Guide, p 27, specifically states that Friends of Education does not manage or operate schools (process) and that Friends of Education holds schools accountable for their performance (outcomes). In addition, Charter Contract Section 11.1(a)1 specifically states that renewal (accountability) is based on school performance, specifically whether the school has improved all pupil learning and all student achievement (outcomes).

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

Essential Elements:

- The authorizer describes a plan to regularly review its internal ability to oversee the portfolio of charter schools
- The authorizer describes the organization's process to implement continuous improvement plans which will result in more effective authorizing practices

Advanced Elements:

- The authorizer describes the process the organization will use to evaluate its internal ability (capacity, infrastructure and practices) regularly against its mission, vision and goals
- The authorizer describes the organization's frameworks for addressing any needs for improvement when falling short of its mission, organizational goals or strategic plan

Plan:

Friends of Education regularly engages in self-evaluation and improvement as a means to fulfill its vision to establish a network of charter schools improving student achievement through business-based accountability measures. The self-evaluation consists of:

1. Staff Performance Reviews. Staff are evaluated at least once each year. During the evaluation process, professional development needs are identified and professional goals established.
2. Authorizer Procedure Review. As a team, leadership, staff, and/or external consultants review authorizer process at least annually. The purpose of the review is three-fold: (a) adopt or revise process to conform to identified quality practices, (b) minimize burden on schools; (c) create efficiencies.
3. Staffing Adequacy. Staffing adequacy is reviewed at least annually, in order to ensure alignment with oversight protocol, technical assistance to be provided, and maintenance of staff:school portfolio ratio.

4. Internal Process. Friends of Education engages in review of internal processes through its regular staff meetings and board activities. The purpose of the reviews is to create efficiencies and identify strategic initiatives.

Continuous Improvement Plan Implementation:

Where improvement areas are identified, Friends of Education implements a continuous improvement process by: (1) identifying the desired outcome(s), (2) identifying the individual primarily responsible for the improvement/outcome, (3) identifying actions to be completed with target dates for milestones and completion, (4) monitoring by leadership, and (5) team review of the product / outcome.

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

Essential Elements:

- The authorizer describes the organization’s process to share best practices and/or provide assistance to other authorizers
- The authorizer describes the organization’s intent to engage with other professionals (such as state or national associations) in order to promote high quality authorizing dissemination

Process & Engagement with Authorization Professionals:

Friends of Education shares and provides technical assistance to other authorizers in the state through:

- participation in the Minnesota Association of Charter School Authorizers (MACSA)
- response to individual requests for guidance
- hosting specific authorizer training
- participation in NACSA

All noted activities promote best-practice sharing and high-quality authorizing dissemination.

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

Essential Element:

- The authorizer describes its internal process which will ensure that it will comply with reporting, submissions and deadlines set forth in Minnesota Statute

Process:

Friends of Education calendars all compliance responsibilities, not only by the due date but by approaching due dates, which are not removed until completed. For example, for the annual Income & Expenditure Report due by September 30th, electronic reminders begin July 1st and continue every two weeks until manually removed from the calendar following completion of the report.

Friends of Education

Part B Measures: Authorizer Processes and Decision Making

Note: Friends of Education engages in continuous self-improvement. Friends of Education is committed to quality authorization, and the forms and processes identified in this CAAP reflect substantive procedures and are subject to further enhancement. Changes likely to be implemented within the next twenty-four months include: (1) differentiating the annual site visit process by length of school operation and school quality; (2) refining the new charter school application review rubric to include individual requirements in each review item to enhance external review and consistency, and (3) differentiating the new charter school application for proven high-quality models to streamline application requirements while maintaining rigorous evaluation criteria.

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

Essential Elements:

- Comprehensive new school application instructions, evaluative criteria, procedures, timelines and review process that address all the following elements:
 - o Mission/Vision
 - o Need/Demand
 - o Primary statutory purpose of improving all pupil learning and all student achievement ([Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.10, Subdivision 1](#)) and how the school will report the implementation of it to the authorizer
 - o Additional purpose(s) and how the school will report the implementation of said purpose(s) to the authorizer
 - o Program designed for students to meet or exceed the outcome expectations adopted by the commissioner for public school students ([Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.10, Subdivision 10](#))
 - o Academic plan: description of the school program, specific academic and nonacademic outcomes that students must achieve, educational philosophy and approach, school culture, curriculum and instruction, assessment and services for special populations
 - o Operational plan: governance and management, administration, human resource recruitment and development, student recruitment and enrollment, admission policy, school calendar, parent and community involvement, operational outcomes and compliance with applicable laws and regulations
 - o Financial plan: short and long-term financial projections, budget(s), business management procedures, financial outcomes and facility planning

- The authorizer’s review process includes clear and transparent procedures and rigorous criteria to evaluate new charter school applications
- The authorizer describes the timeline of the new school application process consistent with statutory deadlines per [Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.10, Subdivision 4](#)
- The authorizer’s new charter school application criteria is consistent with the authorizer’s performance standards/framework as described in *B.4: Performance Standards*

Advanced Element:

- The authorizer identifies how its new charter school application process is designed to promote high quality charter schools and align with national quality authorizing principles and standards

Application Instructions:

Application Instructions are on the website, www.improvek-12education.org, and included as B.1 New Charter School Application Documents/Application Instructions and Format Requirements.

The evaluation rubric is on the website and included as B.1/New Charter School Application Documents/Application Evaluation Rubric.

Evaluation Criteria:

Guidance is embedded in the application (e.g. Each required element provides guidance in the form of, “A quality application will . . .”).

Application Procedures:

The application process is described in the Charter School Program Guide, p 5, and on the website.

Timeline.

The application timeline is on the website and included as B.1/New Charter School Application Documents/Application Timeline. As set forth in the document, the application due date is published on the website, and the process is aligned to ensure that, if the application is approved, the authorizer affidavit is submitted by May 1st, which is fourteen months prior to July 1st of the year in which the school plans to open, in conformance with state law.

Application:

The application, containing all required components, is on the website and included as B.1/New Charter School Application Documents/Application New School July 2015.

Application Criteria Consistent with Performance Standards Framework

The new charter school application criteria and evaluation is designed to determine whether the founding group has a plan and the capacity to develop ad high-quality charter school which will improve all pupil learning and all student achievement. The performance framework, as discussed in B.5, evaluates the degree to which the school does so.

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

Essential Element:

- Comprehensive application instructions, evaluative criteria, procedures, timelines and review processes, including academic, operational and financial conditions upon which the authorizer approves or denies the following:
 - o Site/grade level expansion per [Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.10, Subdivision 4\(j\) and \(k\)](#)
 - o Official early learning program(s) recognition per [Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.10, Subdivision 8\(f\)](#) and [Minnesota Statutes, sections 121A.16 to 121A.19](#)
 - o Change in authorizer requests per [Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.10, Subdivision 23\(c\)](#)
 - o Ready to Open per [Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.10, Subdivision 4\(c\)](#)

Advanced Element:

- The Authorizer identifies how its interim accountability decision-making processes are designed to promote high quality charter schools and align with national quality authorizing principles and standards
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Expansions:

Friends of Education believes that one of the best indicators of future performance is past performance and, consequently, comprehensively evaluates a school's historical performance when considering expansions; however, expansion applications are also evaluated for plan adequacy.

The expansion application is contained in the Charter School Program Guide, pp 12-17. The application includes evaluation criteria, including academic, operational, and financial performance. As noted in the Charter School Program Guide, p 12, applications are due to Friends of Education by July 1st, with a response due to the school by September 1st. This timeline facilitates the October 1st statutory affidavit due date.

Friends of Education's review process consists of: internal review of the application for determination of meeting application criteria; recommendation to Charter School Committee/Board; Committee/Board review and decision.

Early Learning Programs:

The Early Learning Program application is contained in the Charter School Program Guide, pp 18-20. As indicated in the application, any school seeking to add an Early Learning Program must also complete an expansion application (pp 12-17 of the Charter School Program Guide). Both applications include the evaluation criteria, including academic, operational, and financial performance. As noted in the Charter School Program Guide, p 12, applications are due to Friends of Education by March 1st, with a response due to the school by September 1st.

Friends of Education's review process consists of: internal review of the application for determination of meeting application criteria; recommendation to Charter School Committee/Board; Committee/Board review and decision.

Change in Authorizer / Transfer:

Similar to expansion applications, Friends of Education believes that one of the best indicators of future performance is past performance and, consequently, comprehensively evaluates a school's historical performance when considering transfers.

The process is described in the Charter School Program Guide, p 21, and the application is available on Friends of Education's website, www.improvek-12education.org and included as B.2 Interim Decisions/Change in Authorizer Application. The application contains embedded guidance and evaluation standards for the application criteria, including academic, operational, and financial performance. As set forth in the evaluation standards in the application, whether existing schools have met their performance standards in academics, finances and operations are the critical factors for the review and decision made by Friends. In addition and as stated in the application, Friends of Education accepts applications on a rolling basis (i.e. no application due date).

Friends of Education’s review process consists of: internal review of the application for determination of meeting application criteria; site visit; recommendation to Charter School Committee/Board; Committee/Board review and decision.

Ready to Open:

Friends of Education’s ready to open process is set forth both in the charter contract (section 6.21) and in the Charter School Program Guide, p 7. Friends of Education’s ready to open standards (available on the website and included as B.2 Interim Decisions/ Startup Progress Form) include over 100 items in 9 categories. The ready to open standards include areas key to charter school success: facilities, financial management, governance and management, learning program, project management, leadership, personnel, enrollment and accountability.

Friends of Education reviews the start-up progress monthly with the school developing team and engages in a comprehensive ready-to-open meeting which reviews the status of all categories.

As set forth both in the charter contract section 6.21 and Charter School Program Guide p 7, Friends of Education either counsels the school to delay opening or intervenes to prevent school opening where significant targets -- including staffing, enrollment, and facility – are not met and, in Friends of Education’s opinion, negatively impact the school’s ability to be a quality charter school.

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

Essential Elements:

- Sample charter contract (See [Charter Contract Guidance](#) on the MDE website) that meets all following elements:
 - o **All** current statutory requirements per [Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.10, Subdivision 6](#)
 - o Clearly state the rights and responsibilities of the school and the authorizer
- The authorizer describes a plan to establish contract outcomes/goals that are strategic, specific, measurable and time-bound
- The authorizer describes its process for how its new contract(s) will be completed within 45 business days of the commissioner’s approval of the authorizer’s affidavit and the authorizer will submit to the commissioner a copy of the signed contract within 10 business days of its execution
- The authorizer describes how its existing contract(s) will be fully executed no later than the first date of the renewal period
- The authorizer describes how the contract will be amended for material contract changes when applicable

Advanced Element:

- The authorizer identifies how its contract term, negotiation and execution decision-making processes are designed to promote high quality charter schools and align with national quality authorizing principles and standards

Sample Charter Contract:

The sample charter contract is included as B.3 Charter Contract & Exhibits, and a crosswalk to the statutory requirements is included as B.3 Statutory Requirements and Contract Location Chart.

Rights and Responsibilities of the School and the Authorizer:

School obligations are set forth primarily in Articles VI, VII, and VIII.

Article III identifies Friends' primary role as oversight. In addition, section 2.1 specifically states that, except as provided in the contract, Friends of Education has no authority or control, over operational, administrative, or financial responsibility for the school.

Establish SMART Goals:

As set forth in the Charter Contract section 11.1(a)4, Friends of Education requires schools to submit proposed goals for the next contract period, by September 1st. That provision requires goals to be in SMART format. This September 1st date begins the contract negotiation process, and Friends of Education counsels adherence to the SMART format requirement.

Execution Compliance:

Friends of Education calendars all compliance responsibilities, not only by the due date but by approaching due dates, which are not removed until completed. For example, for July 1st renewal contracts, electronic reminders begin May 1st and continue every two weeks until July 1st; beginning July 1st, electronic reminders occur daily until manually removed from the calendar following contract submission. A similar process occurs for new charter school contracts: as soon as the Commissioner approval is received, 45 business days are calculated and calendared with similar reminders.

Charter Contract Amendment:

As set forth in the Charter School Program Guide, p 23, circumstances may warrant a charter contract amendment. As set forth in the Charter School Program Guide, any charter school may request an amendment; Friends of Education will review requests on a case-by-case basis and, if approved, requires the amendments to be in writing. As also set forth in the Charter School Program Guide, Friends of Education does not amend charter contract academic goals due to failure to make progress towards achieving them without other compelling factors, such as discontinuance of the identified assessment. Friends of Education provides copies of material amendments to the Minnesota Department of Education within ten business days of execution.

Measure B.4 - Performance Standards: *The authorizer has a performance framework under which it executes contracts with clear, measurable and attainable performance standards.*

Essential Elements:

- Performance framework addressing all the following elements:
 - o States the primary purpose of the charter schools in its portfolio is to improve all pupil learning and all student achievement and identifies additional purposes per [Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.10, Subdivision 1 and Subdivisions 6\(1\) and 6\(2\)](#)
 - o The performance framework defines clear, measurable and attainable academic, operational and financial performance standards for all schools in its portfolio per [Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.10, Subdivision 6](#)
 - o The performance framework is designed to achieve outcomes that meet or exceed expectations adopted by the commissioner for public school students per [Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.10, Subdivision 10](#)
 - Commissioner's outcomes for public school students are the five goals of World's Best Workforce:
 - All children are ready for school

- All third-graders can read at grade level
- All racial and economic achievement gaps between students are closed
- All students are ready for career and college
- All students graduate from high school

Advanced Element:

- The authorizer identifies how its performance framework is designed to promote high quality charter schools and aligns with national quality authorizing principles and standards
-

Performance Framework:

The performance standards are set forth in the charter contracts, a sample of which is included as B.3 Charter Contract & Exhibits:

1. Academic Performance Standards are established in Exhibit F, academic and nonacademic outcomes/goals.
2. Financial Performance Standards are set forth in Article VI, primarily section 6.9, and in Exhibit J (Financial Management Plan).
3. Operational Performance Standards are also set forth in Article VI.
4. The consequences resulting in termination are clearly identified in Article X, and the consequences related to nonrenewal are set forth in Article XI, summarized as: renewal is based on the school’s performance in improving all pupil learning and all student achievement which is based substantially on the school’s attainment of its goals in Exhibit F; superior financial or operational performance does not trump academic performance, but superior academic performance with financial or operational problems may also result in nonrenewal.

Friends of Education believes that containing the performance standards within the contract is imperative to ensure clear, transparent standards.

Primary Purpose:

The performance framework is contained within the charter contract; consequently, the charter contract identifies the primary purpose of each charter school as improving all pupil learning and all student achievement, see p 1, para. 1 of the charter contract, B.3 Charter Contract & Exhibits Template. In addition, and as noted above, Section 11.1(a)1 of the charter contract also reflects the primary purpose of improving all pupil learning and all student achievement as the most important factor in evaluation and renewal.

Designed to Achieve Outcomes Meeting/Exceeding Commissioner Expectations for Public Schools:

As set forth in Contract Article XI regarding renewal, Friends of Education requires charter schools to propose goals which are designed to meet or exceed the Commissioner’s expectations for public schools. Once finalized, those goals comprise Exhibit F, which is the academic performance standards framework.

Measure B.5 - Authorizer's Processes for Ongoing Oversight of the Portfolio Charter

Schools: *The authorizer has processes to monitor and oversee the schools in its portfolio in the areas of academic, operational and financial performance.*

Essential Elements:

- The authorizer describes the criteria, processes and procedures it will use to monitor and evaluate the fiscal, operational and academic performance of the schools in its portfolio per [Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.10, Subdivision 6\(7\)](#)
- The authorizer describes required academic, financial and operational reporting by the schools to the authorizer
- The authorizer describes an oversight plan that clearly establishes the criteria, processes and procedures that the authorizer will use to evaluate performance and monitor compliance, ensure school autonomy and protect student rights
- The authorizer describes how its ongoing oversight informs its standards and processes for intervention, termination and renewal decisions of the portfolio of charter schools (i.e. performance measures B.6 and B.9)

Advanced Element:

- The authorizer identifies how its ongoing oversight of the portfolio of charter schools is designed to promote high quality charter schools and aligns with national quality authorizing principles and standards

Criteria, Process, Procedures:

Friends of Education utilizes the oversight criteria, process, and procedures identified in the charter contract.

Charter Contract, section 3.1 and Article VI, included as B.3 Charter Contract & Exhibits Template, pp 4 & 6-13: Section 3.1 states that Friends will monitor and evaluate school performance using the criteria, processes, and procedures set forth in Article VI and Exhibit M (which is pages 8-9 of the Charter School Program Guide). Section 3.1 also states that, in the spirit of continuous improvement, the school agrees that Friends may monitor and evaluate *any* indicator of academic, financial, operational, and student performance, even performance indicators not expressly set forth in the contract. This provides a wholistic review of school performance. Article VI identifies the ongoing oversight and reporting obligations by the school to Friends of Education.

In summary, Friends of Education:

- (1) evaluates information it receives about its schools, such as publicly-reported information (e.g. state assessment information, consolidated financial reports), and information it receives from schools (e.g. external audits, annual reports, monthly board packets).
- (2) monitors schools for compliance, such as review of school websites for compliance, review of school enrollment applications for compliance, etc.
- (3) engages in site visits, applying standards of academic achievement, financial management, and operational / legal accountability.

In addition to evaluating performance and monitoring compliance as indicated above, because the oversight is governed by the charter contract, and the charter contract sets forth expectations with respect to conflicts of interest (see A.7 discussion), autonomy (see A.8 discussion), and student rights (see e.g. charter contract Article VII and charter contract section 8.1), Friends of Education's oversight protocol also promotes school autonomy and children's rights.

Reporting by the Schools to the Authorizer:

A school's reporting obligations to Friends of Education are identified in Charter Contract, Article VI. See. e.g: Section 6.7(a) academic assessment data; 6.7(a)6, professional development attended by staff; 6.7(a)7, common planning time reports; 6.8, school calendar; 6.9(a), financial reporting including monthly financial reports and annual budget; 6.11, external audit; 6.14 annual report; 6.20, board data including changes, assurances, minutes, notice of meetings, conflicts of interest statements; 6.21(b)1, teacher licensure information; 6.21(b)2, enrollment; 11.3, building lease.

As set forth in the Charter School Program Guide, p 11, Friends of Education waives selected reporting requirements for high-performing well-managed schools. The waiver is granted in writing and may be revoked at any time, at Friends of Education's discretion. Friends of Education believes such differentiated oversight reduces regulatory burden and promotes school autonomy.

Alignment with Intervention, Termination & Renewal:

Friends of Education evaluates all information it obtains – including through its ongoing oversight – to inform its decision-making. Ongoing Oversight and action – whether intervention, termination, renewal -- are inherently related. For example, interventions/notices of concern may result from Friends of Education's ongoing oversight processes and may lead to corrective action renewal or contract termination.

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

Essential Elements:

- The authorizer describes standards, procedures and processes to address and resolve complaints, including forms if applicable
- The authorizer describes standards, procedures and processes for intervention and a plan for implementing corrective action
- The authorizer describes how its standards and processes for intervention, corrective action and response to complaints align with its ongoing oversight of the portfolio of charter schools (i.e. performance measure B.5)

Advanced Element:

- The authorizer identifies how its standards and processes for interventions, corrective action and response to complaints are designed to promote high quality charter schools and align with national quality authorizing principles and standards

Complaints:

The Charter School Stakeholder Grievance Guidance is contained in the Charter School Program Guide, p 28, which is also available on the Friends of Education website, www.improvek-12education.org . In summary, for complaints within its oversight purview, Friends of Education requires complaints to be in writing, conducts a reasonable inquiry, and strives to respond within thirty days.

Interventions:

Charter Contract section 6.7(c) identifies the remediation process: Friends of Education issues a notice of concern. If the notice of concern is unresolved, Friends issues a formal notice to the Board and may

ask the school board to adopt a specific performance improvement plan. If the issue remains unresolved, Friends may initiate charter termination proceedings. This process is also explained in the Charter School Program Guide, p 22.

Alignment with Ongoing Oversight:

Interventions and Ongoing Oversight are inherently related and inform one another. For example, interventions/notices of concern may result from Friends of Education’s ongoing oversight process -- a site visit may reveal an issue warranting an intervention/notice of concern. In addition, complaints may warrant a special site visit.

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

Essential Element:

- The authorizer describes its plan to provide support and technical assistance and in a manner to preserve school autonomy

Plan:

Friends of Education provides Technical Assistance annually in two forms:

1. *Direct Technical Assistance.* Friends of Education retains consultants for the sole purpose of assisting its schools in various areas.
2. *Professional Development.* Friends of Education provides professional development opportunities both to prevent problems and to promote continuous improvement.

What Technical Assistance/Subject Matter is Provided. The subject matter of the technical assistance is generally determined based on need, but it may also be determined based on opportunity. For example, site visits, school survey responses, or specific school requests generally determine need for a particular subject matter (e.g. special education, crisis prevention) and resulting identification and allocation of resources; however, not all requests for technical assistance may be granted based on availability of human and/or financial resources. In addition, specific opportunities may also determine the technical assistance provided. For example, Dr. Mike Schmoker – former administrator, teacher, coach and author of best-selling *FOCUS: Elevating the Essentials to Radically Improve Student Learning* - recently became available and will provide a professional development session to Friends of Education schools.

When Technical Assistance is Provided. Direct technical assistance for the coming school year is generally identified and announced prior to September each year, and schools schedule the direct technical assistance independently. Professional Development is generally provided during the school year at all-school directors meetings hosted by Friends of Education, 2-4 times/annually; and at specifically scheduled professional development offerings, a minimum of 1/annually.

School Autonomy:

The Technical Assistance is not required and is provided at no-charge.

Measure B.8 - High Quality Charter School Replication and Dissemination of Best School Practices: *The authorizer has an established process to promote, within its portfolio, the model replication and dissemination of best practices of high performing charter schools.*

Essential Element:

- The authorizer describes a clear plan for successful model replication and dissemination of best practices
-

Friends of Education’s plan for model replication is three-fold:

- (1) require new charter school applications to identify research supporting the educational model, curricula, and teaching methods supporting the proposal (see B.1 New Charter School Application Documents/Application New School, p 3, item E.(2)b), in order to identify high-quality models to promote within Friends of Education’s portfolio;
- (2) implement an application for proven high-quality model replication, which reduces application burden while maintaining rigorous evaluation standards and market the differentiated process; and
- (3) promote and support replication of existing high-quality Friends of Education schools.

Friends of Education’s plan for dissemination of best practices is four-fold:

- (1) identify best practices – whether nationally or locally derived – and disseminate identified practices to Friends of Education schools;
- (2) identify Friends of Education schools which have exceptionally implemented identified best practices and disseminate those schools’ strategies/tips regarding best practice implementation;
- (3) sponsor dissemination of additional best practice acquisition for Friends of Education schools at events not sponsored by Friends of Education; and
- (4) sponsor dissemination of school board governance best practices.

In addition, Friends of Education has and plans to continue, to the extent allowed by resources, to retain a consultant to work with schools on identified best practice dissemination.

Identified best practices which Friends of Education disseminates include:

- Data-Driven Instruction (DDI), to the extent allowed by Minn. Stat. 120B.301 passed in the 2015 Special Session. DDI is a continuous improvement cycle: (1) rigorous interim assessments directly aligned to state standards; (2) analysis of the assessments to determine whether standards were learned and to identify gaps; (3) review of teaching plans corresponding to learning gaps in order to identify potential gaps in teaching and revise teaching to address the gaps; (4) re-teaching standards not learned; and (5) repeat the cycle.
- Effective Teacher Observation and Coaching, which provides regular and ongoing coaching in best-teaching practices.
- Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress, which is a literacy assessment and identifies progress and gaps in literacy skill acquisition.

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

Essential Elements:

- Comprehensive evaluative standards, procedures, timelines and review processes to evaluate a school’s academic, operational and financial performance for high-stakes renewal and termination decisions consistent with [Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.10, Subdivisions 6\(7\), 6\(8\), 6\(13\), 6\(14\) and Subdivision 15\(a\)](#) and includes the following:
 - o Standards and process to evaluate the school’s performance in meeting or exceeding outcomes adopted by the commissioner for public school students ([Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.10, Subdivision 10](#))
 - o Standards and process to issue a formal written performance evaluation of the school’s contract outcomes to determine eligibility for contract renewal per [Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.10, Subdivision 6\(8\)](#)
 - o The authorizer describes clear standards for consequences for meeting or not meeting performance standards

- School closure plan and describes the authorizer’s role in the orderly closure of a school in the event of revocation, non-renewal or voluntary relinquishment of the charter per [Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.10, Subdivision 6\(15\), Subdivision 23 and Subdivision 24](#)

Advanced Element:

- The authorizer identifies how its charter school renewal or termination decision-making processes are designed to promote high quality charter schools and align with national quality authorizing principles and standards

Evaluation of School Performance:

The renewal process is set-forth in Section 11(a)4 of the charter contract and summarized on p 24 of the Charter School Program Guide: a school submits an application by September 1st; within four weeks of receipt of the school’s final external audit for the immediately preceding fiscal year, Friends will notify the school of whether it intends to offer a renewal contract. As also set forth in the Charter School Program Guide, pp 11 & 24, Friends of Education may waive the renewal application for high-performing well-managed schools, except that Friends of Education will always require a school to submit proposed goals for the next contract period.

Due to the regular site visits in the schools and frequency of communication with the schools, Friends of Education does not engage in a separate renewal site-visit process, i.e. the site visit for schools in renewal is the same as the site visit for schools not in renewal. This similarity in site visit process demonstrates that renewal is based on performance data already generated, while considering the possibility that a site visit may identify issues not previously identified.

The charter contract is the “life” document of a charter school, and all standards related to the school’s current existence are contained within it. As such, the performance standards set forth in the charter contract determine evaluation. As set forth in Contract Article XI regarding renewal, Friends of Education requires charter schools to propose goals which are designed to meet or exceed the Commissioner’s expectations for public schools. Once negotiated and finalized, those goals comprise Exhibit F, which is the cornerstone of the academic performance framework. Consequently, the

evaluation of the school's attainment in meeting its academic goals is designed to determine the degree to which each school is meeting or exceeding the Commissioner's expectations for public schools.

Written Performance Evaluation:

Friends of Education comprehensively analyzes each school's performance data. Friends of Education then issues a written renewal evaluation which is included as Exhibit N to the Charter Contract. The written evaluation analyzes the school's performance in academics, finances, and operations.

Standards and Consequences for Meeting/Not Meeting Performance Standards:

The Charter Contract, section 11.1(a)1 specifically states that improving all pupil learning and all student achievement is the most important factor in determining contract renewal, and that the determination will be based primarily on the school's attainment of its academic outcomes in the contract; however, the contract also allows Friends to consider other compelling evidence of student achievement on state assessments. The contract also allows termination for serious financial or legal problems. The charter contract also sets forth the circumstances for a corrective action renewal – the school is improving all pupil learning and all student achievement but the school has financial and/or operational issues – and that the circumstances resulting in the corrective action renewal, must be fixed during the corrective action renewal term or no subsequent renewal will be provided (see section 11.1(a)3).

Closure Plan:

The school closure plan, which is included as Exhibit L to the Charter Contract, included as B.3 Charter Contract & Exhibits Template pp 43-58, identifies separate responsibilities for both Friends of Education and the charter school.

Friends of Education										
Estimated Budget SY 2016 - SY 2020										
	2016		2017		2018		2019		2020	
<i>Growth Plans: Limited and Accelerated</i>	<i>Limited</i>	<i>Accelerated</i>								
# Schools Authorized	16	16	18	25	20	35	22	45	24	55
Staff/Consultant FTEs	2.9	2.9	3.3	4.5	3.6	6.3	4.0	8.2	4.4	10.0
FTE to Portfolio Ratio (1 FTE per number of schools)	5.52	5.52	5.45	5.56	5.56	5.56	5.50	5.49	5.45	5.50
Revenue										
Statutory Authorizer Fees	324,000	324,000	354,212	459,954	384,424	611,014	414,636	762,074	444,848	913,134
Total Revenue	324,000	317,000	354,212	459,954	384,424	611,014	414,636	762,074	444,848	913,134
Out-of-Pocket Expenditures*										
Staff & External Consultants*	102,000	102,000	183,150	249,750	199,800	349,650	222,000	455,100	244,200	555,000
Internal Capacity & Skill Development	6,000	6,000	7,590	10,350	8,280	14,490	9,200	18,860	10,120	23,000
Self-Evaluation & Infrastructure Development	11,875	11,875	9,500	16,625	10,450	21,375	11,400	26,125	12,350	28,500
Dissemination to Other Authorizers	3,000	3,000	3,500	3,500	4,000	4,000	4,500	4,500	5,000	5,000
Technical Assistance, Replication, Best Practice Dissemi	125,000	125,000	90,000	100,000	95,000	110,000	100,000	125,000	100,000	154,000
Accounting & External Audit	13,500	13,500	14,000	14,000	14,500	14,500	15,000	15,000	15,500	15,500
Facility & Utilities*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Legal	5,000	5,600	6,300	8,750	7,000	12,250	7,700	15,750	8,400	19,250
Office Supplies*	500	560	630	875	700	1,225	770	1,575	840	1,925
Communications / Publications / Website	16,892	16,896	19,008	26,400	21,120	36,960	23,232	47,520	25,344	58,080
Mileage	2,800	2,800	3,150	4,375	3,500	6,125	3,850	7,875	4,200	9,625
Membership / Dues	6,250	6,250	6,300	8,750	7,000	12,250	7,700	15,750	8,400	19,250
Other / Miscellaneous	5,000	5,008	5,634	7,825	6,260	10,955	6,886	14,085	7,512	17,215
Total Expenditures	297,817	298,489	343,128	443,375	371,350	582,825	405,352	733,055	434,354	889,130
Net Income (Deficit)	26,183	18,511	11,084	16,579	13,074	28,189	9,284	29,019	10,494	24,004
*Excludes in-kind contributions; estimated collective minimum = \$150,000/annually										
Notes:										
2017-2020 Revenue based on SY2017 Formula Allowance.										
Growth assumes an even mix of small, medium, large schools; consequently, revenue growth projections are based on mid-sized schools (\$15,106/school (166 PU), based on SY2017 Formual Allowance).										