



Friends of Education
Commissioner-Approved Authorizing Plan
 Effective July 1, 2020

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Friends of Education

Part A: Authorizer Capacity and Infrastructure

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

Essential Elements:

- Identify the authorizer’s clear and compelling mission and indicate how it fully aligns with Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 124E.
 - Describe how the authorizer will carry out its mission by chartering schools.
-

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. 124E.01.

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 Organizational Goals: *The authorizer has clear organizational goals and timeframes for achievement that are aligned with its authorizing mission and Minnesota charter school statute.*

Essential Elements:

- Identify the authorizer’s clear organizational goals, criteria and timeframes for achievement.
 - Indicate how the organizational goals align with the authorizing mission and Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 124E.
-

Friends of Education’s organizational goals further its mission and the statutory primary purpose through seeking to:

- improve pupil learning by increasing school performance, and
- improve **all** pupil learning by increasing educational equity.

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.
- At least 80% of individual school performance annually exceeds resident district performance in proficiency on state assessments.
- 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. Increase Educational Equity:

- At least 80% of individual schools will reduce achievement gaps, in at least 60% of 2019 reportable racial, economic, and English Learner subgroups, by the conclusion of SY2024 (baseline measurement: 2019 state assessment data).
- 100% of individual schools will annually report, beginning for SY2021, the school's plan: (1) to identify students who fall behind, (2) the assistance/supports provided by the school to those students, (3) summarized results of efforts/targeted supports, and (4) changes in assistance/supports made during the school year or to be made in the following school year.
- At least 50% of individual schools will complete an educational equity audit by the conclusion of SY2024.

Measure A.3 – Authorizer Structure of Operations: *The authorizer operates with a clear structure of duties and responsibilities sufficient to effectively oversee its portfolio of charter schools.*

Essential Elements:

- Describe the capacity of the organization to serve as an authorizer, including the positions (e.g. employees, contractors, volunteers, both paid and unpaid positions) allocated to authorizing duties, the qualifications for those positions, the job descriptions of those positions, the full-time equivalencies of those positions, and the financial resources available to fund the positions.
- Describe a clear structure of duties and responsibilities that will be sufficient to effectively oversee and meet the needs of the portfolio of charter schools, including how the structure will be updated if and when necessary.
- Provide 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 period.
- Describe how the authorizer will appropriately manage, retain, and safeguard school and student information and records related to authorizing.

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. Descriptions/responsibilities of those positions are identified in the Charter School Program Guide, p 30. Resources to fund the positions consist of statutory authorizer fees and may include in-kind donations.

Ratio of FTE Positions to Portfolio Size:

Friends of Education will maintain a staff + external resources (2.9 FTE) ratio to schools in portfolio of a minimum of 1 : 5.5. Any future increases in portfolio size will result in increases to staff + external resources to maintain a comparable ratio.

Structure:

The 2.5 staff FTE consists of an Executive Director (0.9 FTE), one assistant (0.8 FTE), and an Education Program Specialist (0.8 FTE). The Executive Director reports to the Board; remaining internal staff and all external resources/consultants report to the Executive Director. The structure is also identified in Charter School Program Guide, p 30. The Executive Director and/or board updates the structure when necessary to reflect staff or responsibility changes.

Note: the individual staff/external resources in each category are as of July 2020 and are 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 staff and/or external resources necessary to do so.

Manage & Safeguard Data:

Friends of Education enjoys considerable support from TCF Financial Corporation, a \$47 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.

Together, these protocols ensure information security and business continuity.

Organizational Chart:

See Organizational Chart, Charter School Program Guide, p 30, 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 staff/external resources to portfolio ratio as identified above.

Measure A.4 – Authorizing Staff Expertise: *The authorizer has appropriate experience, expertise and skills to sufficiently oversee its portfolio of charter schools.*

Essential Element:

- Provide the background and experience of authorizing staff (such as through resume and/or vitae), including individuals both paid (e.g. staff) and unpaid (e.g. board members) as well as contractors hired by the authorizer, necessary to demonstrate the authorizer has appropriate experience, expertise and skills to sufficiently oversee its portfolio of charter schools.

Collectively, Friends of Education’s current staff (including board members) and external resources possess the experience, expertise, and skills as identified in the chart below.

Expertise, Experience, Skills:

Topic	Experience, Expertise, Skills possessed by:	Background & Experience:
Charter schools	2 staff; 2 external resources/consultants	<u>Staff:</u> 1: Licensed teacher, 5+ years experience; charter school authorizer, 1 year experience 1: charter school authorizer, 15+ years experience <u>External Resources:</u> 1: Licensed teacher and administrator, 15+ years experience in charter school leadership or authorization; 1: Licensed teacher, 20+ years Charter school authorizer: 7+ years
Curriculum	3 external resources/consultants	1: Masters in Education; traditional district curriculum coordinator, 2+ years; school improvement specialties, 5+ years experience 1: Masters in Education; curriculum coach, 7+ years experience; for school districts 1: Masters in Education; school leader, 7+ years experience
Instruction	1 staff; 3 external resources/consultants	<u>Staff:</u> Masters in Teaching; 5+ years experience teaching and assessment <u>External Resources:</u> Each : B.A., M.A. or M.Ed in teaching and each 10+ years teaching, or coaching / supervising teachers
Management	1 staff; -2 external resources/consultants	<u>Staff:</u> Manage 40+ staff, \$15 million budget, 5+ years <u>External Resources:</u> 1: Masters in Education; school leader, 7+ years experience; 1: Masters in Education; 20+ years experience managing special education programs
Facilities	3 staff; 1 external resources/consultants	<u>Staff:</u> Each: business operator with multiple locations, 20+ years experience <u>External Resources:</u> Masters in Education; school leader, 7+ years experience
Finance	3 staff	1: Masters Taxation; tax analyst, 10+ years 1: Business developer, 30+ years; CPA, 30+ years 1: Nonprofit management, 15+ years
Law	1 staff; 2 external resources/consultants	<u>Staff:</u> 30+ years licensed attorney; charter school, 15 years experience <u>External Resources:</u> each 20+ years licensed attorney; charter schools, each 10+ years experience

Note: the individual staff/external resources in each category are as of July 2020 and are subject to change. Regardless of individual FTE changes, however, Friends of Education is committed to maintaining experience, expertise, and skills in each topic and will retain staff and/or external resources necessary to do so.

Measure A.5 – Authorizer Knowledge and Skill Development of Authorizing Leadership and 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, mission and goals for overseeing its portfolio of charter schools.*

Essential Elements:

- Describe the authorizer’s intentional plan to offer professional development to build the knowledge and skill base of authorizing leadership and staff.
- Describe the frequency and nature of potential professional development as well as personnel expected to attend.
- Describe how professional development will align with the authorizer’s operations, mission and organizational goals for overseeing its 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.

Health considerations, such as COVID-19, may limit professional development to on-line platforms.

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, Mission 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, and the needs and responsibilities of authorizing the portfolio of charter schools.*

Essential Elements:

- Include the authorizer’s anticipated five-year budget outlining the following:
 - Anticipated revenue sources such as fees collected annually from schools and additional funds from outside sources.
 - Anticipated expenditures such as staff, travel, lease, consultants, office costs (e.g. equipment, supplies), etc.
 - Anticipated staff expenditures and personnel budget increases in relation to portfolio growth.
- Provide the target number and size of schools for the portfolio of charter schools for a five-year period.
- Authorizer demonstrates resource allocations are sufficient to fulfill authorizing responsibilities and are commensurate with the needs and scale of the anticipated portfolio of charter schools (e.g. income, expenditures, number and size of charter schools in the portfolio).

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:

- Include the authorizer’s clear policy to address conflicts of interest in all decision-making processes concerning the portfolio of charter schools.
- Describe the process and procedures for intentionally implementing and executing the authorizer’s conflict of interest policy to avoid conflicts of interest that might affect the authorizer’s capacity to make objective, merit-based application and renewal decisions and not avoid decisions and interventions that hold the charter school accountable for its performance.
- Describe how application review and decision-making processes are free of conflicts of interest, and require full disclosure of any potential or perceived conflicts of interest between reviewers, decision-makers and applicants.

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 27. 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, Charter School Program Guide p 28, 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 reviews the Conflicts of Interest policy with staff and external consultants 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:

- Include the authorizer’s clear policy to ensure, preserve and support the essential autonomies of the portfolio of charter schools.
- Describe how the authorizer’s policy on school autonomy establishes and recognizes the schools’ authority over academics, financials and operations and respects the schools’ authority over day-to-day operations.

- Describe the processes and procedures for implementing and executing the authorizer’s policy to ensure school autonomy.
 - Describe how the authorizer will hold charter schools accountable for performance outcomes and compliance with statute rather than on processes and inputs.
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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 28. 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 numerous 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 28, 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:

- Describe the authorizer’s plan to regularly evaluate its internal ability to oversee the portfolio of charter schools.
- Describe how the authorizer’s self-evaluations will be intentional and planned to build the authorizer’s capacity, infrastructure and practices to oversee its portfolio of charter schools.

Plan:

Friends of Education regularly engages in self-evaluation and improvement as a means to fulfill its mission. 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. Friends of Education leadership, staff, and/or external consultants review authorizer processes through staff meetings or board activities, but at least annually. The purpose of the review is to: (a) adopt or revise process to conform to identified quality practices, (b) minimize burden on schools; (c) create efficiencies, and identify strategic initiatives.
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.

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 target dates for 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:

- Describe the authorizer’s plan and process to share and disseminate best authorizing practices and/or provide technical assistance to other authorizers to promote high-quality authorizing.
- Describe the authorizer’s intent to engage with other professionals (such as state or national associations) in order to improve the authorizing community of practice, including sharing of best practices and/or providing technical assistance to other authorizers.

Process & Engagement with Authorization Professionals:

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

- participation in the Minnesota Association of Charter School Authorizers (MACSA)
- response to individual requests for guidance
- participating in and/or hosting specific authorizer development
- 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 Statutes.*

Essential Element:

- Describe the authorizer’s internal process to ensure compliance with reporting, submissions and deadlines set forth in Minnesota statutes.

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.

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Part B: Authorizer Process and Decision-Making

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

Essential Elements:

- Submit transparent, rigorous and comprehensive new charter school application instructions and questions, evaluative criteria, procedures, timelines, review standards and processes, and applicant guidance that are aligned with statute and address the following elements;
 - Demonstration of need for the proposed school in the community to be served.
 - Evidence of demand for the proposed school in the community to be served.
 - The school’s broadly inclusive mission statement.
 - The statutory purposes (primary purpose and additional purposes) the school intends to fulfill, per Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.01, subdivision 1.
 - Grade levels to be served.
 - Academic plan: description of the school’s educational program based on the need and demand in the community to be served, specific academic and nonacademic outcomes that students must achieve, educational philosophy and approach, daily schedule, school culture, curriculum and instruction, assessment, and services for special populations.
 - A charter school must design its programs to at least meet the outcomes adopted by the commissioner for public school students, including world’s best workforce goals under section 120B.11, subdivision 1. In the absence of the commissioner’s requirements governing state standards and benchmarks the school must meet the outcomes contained in the contract with the authorizer. The achievement levels of the outcomes contained in the contract may exceed the achievement levels of any outcomes adopted by the commissioner for public school students (Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.10, subdivision 1(c).
 - Operational plan: governance and management structure, administration, human resource recruitment and development, student recruitment and enrollment, lottery and admission policy, school calendar, parent and community involvement, compliance with applicable laws and regulations, facility planning and locations.
 - Financial plan to start up school operations and sustain the school’s finances after opening: short and long-term financial projections, budget(s), and business management procedures.
 - If the school intends to apply for federal Charter School Program (CSP) grant funds, the financial plan should include contingencies if CSP funds are not awarded.
 - Background and experience of the school’s founders, developers and applicant team.
 - A “statement of assurances” of legal compliance prescribed by the commissioner.
 - Any other information the authorizer requests.

Application Instructions:

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

The evaluation rubric is on the website and included as B.1 New School 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 5-6, and on the website.

Timeline.

The application timeline is on the website and included as B.1 New Charter School 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 Charter School Application and Guidance New School, B.1 Sample Budget and Cashflow, and Statement of Assurances included in B.3 Charter Contract & Exhibits Template pp 38-43 (the same Statement of Assurances is used for both new school applicants and charter contracts).

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

Essential Elements:

- For each interim accountability decision below, submit transparent, rigorous and comprehensive application instructions and questions, evaluative criteria, procedures, timelines, review standards and processes, and applicant guidance that are aligned with statute and

include academic, operational and financial conditions upon which the authorizer approves or denies:

- Adding grades or sites per Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.06, subdivision 5, including early learning programs per Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.06, subdivision 3(b) and Minnesota Statutes, sections 124E.03, subdivision 7(b).
 - Change in authorizer requests per Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.10, subdivision 5
 - Ready to open per Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.06, subdivision 3(h).
-

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 13-18. 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 19-21. As indicated in the application, any school seeking to add an Early Learning Program must also complete an expansion application (pp 13-18 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 19, 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 22, and the application is available on Friends of Education's website, www.improvek-12education.org and included as B.2 Change in Authorizer Application and Rubric. 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); however, as stated on the website, charter schools are urged to consider the statutory timing requirements when submitting a change in authorizer application.

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 7-8. 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 12 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 8, 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 executes contracts that clearly define material terms and rights and responsibilities of the school and the authorizer.*

Essential Elements:

- Provide a charter contract template that meets the following elements:
 - All current statutory requirements per Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.10, subdivision 1(a-b) and 3(c).
 - Clearly states the rights and responsibilities of the school and the authorizer.
 - Defines any other material terms.
- Describes how renewal and change in authorizer contracts will be fully executed no later than the first day of the renewal period.

Sample Charter Contract:

The sample charter contract is included as B.3 Charter Contract & Exhibits Template, 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 and contracts resulting from a change in authorizer, 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 24, 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 Outcomes and Standards: *The authorizer has a performance framework under which it executes contracts with clear, measurable and attainable performance outcomes and standards. The authorizer has established processes designed to hold charter schools in its portfolio accountable to its academic, financial and operational performance outcomes and standards.*

Essential Elements:

- Provide a comprehensive performance framework addressing the following elements:
 - The performance framework identifies 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 124E.01, subdivision 1, and Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.10, subdivisions 1(a)(1) and 1(a)(2).
 - The performance framework defines clear, measurable and attainable academic, operational and financial performance outcomes and standards for all schools in its portfolio per Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.10, and consequences to hold charter schools accountable for meeting or not meeting performance outcomes and standards.
 - The performance framework is designed to at least meet the outcomes adopted by the commissioner for public school students, including world’s best workforce goals under section 120B.11, subdivision 1 per Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.10, subdivision 1(c).

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 of Charter Schools: *The authorizer has processes to monitor and oversee charter schools in the areas of academics, operations and finances.*

Essential Elements:

- Describe the criteria, processes and procedures the authorizer will use to monitor and evaluate the fiscal, operational and academic performance of charter schools in the portfolio, consistent with subdivision 3, paragraphs (a) and (b) per Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.10, subdivision 1(a)(7).
- Describe the charter schools’ required academic, financial, operational and legal reporting to the authorizer.
- Describe an oversight plan that clearly establishes the criteria, processes and procedures the authorizer will use to competently evaluate academic, financial and operational performance and monitor compliance with applicable law.
- Describe how the authorizer’s ongoing oversight informs its standards and processes for intervention, termination and renewal decisions for its portfolio of charter schools (i.e. performance measure B.6 and B.9).

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 9-10 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. Health considerations, such as COVID-19, may limit scope, nature, and frequency of site visits.

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 12, 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, intervention and corrective action.*

Essential Elements:

- Describe clear and comprehensive standards, procedures and processes to address and resolve complaints, including forms, if applicable.
- Describe clear and comprehensive standards, procedures and processes for intervention and corrective action.
- Describe how the authorizer’s 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).

Complaints:

The Charter School Stakeholder Grievance policy is contained in the Charter School Program Guide, p 29, 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 or involves an urgent matter, 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 23.

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 a plan to support its portfolio of charter schools through intentional assistance and development offerings.*

Essential Elements:

- Describe the intentional plan to provide proactive support, development and technical assistance to the portfolio of charter schools.
- Describe how support, development and technical assistance will be provided in a variety of areas 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 (e.g. availability of expert/presenter).

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, generally at least 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.

Health considerations such as COVID-19 may limit the technical assistance and professional development offered; for example, planned in-person technical assistance and professional development may be cancelled and may not be able to be provided in alternative platforms.

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

Essential Element:

- Describe an intentional plan for successful model replication and dissemination of best practices of high-quality charter schools, including how models/practices will be identified.

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 Charter School Application and Guidance New School, p 4, item E.(2)b), in order to identify high-quality models to promote within Friends of Education’s portfolio;
- (2) maintain 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’ models/practices.

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.

Friends of Education identifies model/practices to be replicated/disseminated from various sources, including:

- School recommendations
- Educational literature
- Success accounts (local or national)

- Effective practices within Friends of Education or other schools

Health considerations, such as COVID-19, may limit scope and nature of replication/dissemination activities.

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:

- Describe transparent and rigorous standards, procedures, timelines and review processes designed to use comprehensive academic, financial, operational and student performance data to make high stakes merit-based renewal decisions and terminate charters when necessary to protect student and public interests, consistent with Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.10, subdivision 1(a)(7), 1(a)(8), 1(a)(13), 1(a)(14), 1(c) and subdivision 3(a). Be sure to address the following:
 - The criteria, processes, and procedures the authorizer will use to monitor and evaluate the schools’ fiscal, operational, and academic performance, consistent with subdivision 3, paragraphs (a) and (b) per Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.10, subdivision 1(a)(7).
 - The formal written performance evaluation that is a prerequisite for reviewing a charter contract under subdivision 3 per Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.10, subdivision 1(a)(8). The authorizer shall provide a formal written evaluation of the school’s performance before the authorizer renews the charter contract per Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.10, subdivision 3(a).
 - The specific conditions for contract renewal that identify the performance of all students under the primary purpose of section 124E.01, subdivision 1, as the most important factor in determining whether to renew the contract per Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.10, subdivision 1(a)(13).
 - The additional purposes under section 124E.01, subdivision 1, and related performance obligations under clause (7) contained in the charter contract as additional factors in determining whether to renew the contract per Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.10, subdivision 1(a)(14).
 - Standards and process to evaluate the school’s performance to at least meet the outcomes adopted by the commissioner for public school students, including world’s best workforce goals under section 120B.11, subdivision 1 per Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.10, subdivision 1(c).
 - Standards for determining consequences for meeting or not meeting performance standards.
- Describe the school closure plan, including the authorizer’s role in the orderly closure of a school in the event of termination, revocation, nonrenewal or voluntary relinquishment of the charter per Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.10, subdivision 1(b), subdivision 4 and subdivision 6.

Evaluation of School Performance:

The renewal process is set-forth in Section 11(a)4 of the charter contract and summarized on p 25 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 12 and 25, 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. Charter Contract section 11.1(a)(1) further states that Friends of Education will consider the achievement of additional identified statutory purposes, as well as the school's financial, operational, and legal compliance performance in the renewal determination. 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 44-57, identifies separate responsibilities for both Friends of Education and the charter school.

Friends of Education
Estimated Budget SY 2021 - SY 2025

	2021		2022		2023		2024		2025	
	Limited	Accelerated								
<i>Projected Growth: Limited and Accelerated</i>										
# Schools Authorized	12	12	12	12	14	20	16	25	18	30
Staff/Consultant FTEs	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.7	3.0	4.6	3.30	5.5
FTE to Portfolio Ratio (1 FTE per number of schools)	4.14	4.14	4.14	4.14	4.83	5.41	5.33	5.49	5.45	5.45
Revenue										
Statutory Authorizer Fees	295,515	295,515	295,515	295,515	328,217	426,323	360,919	508,078	393,621	589,833
Total Revenue	295,515	295,515	295,515	295,515	328,217	426,323	360,919	508,078	393,621	589,833
Out-of-Pocket Expenditures*										
Internal Staff* & External Consultants	50,000	50,000	52,000	52,000	55,000	84,000	60,000	143,500	75,000	210,000
Professional Fees (e.g. accounting, legal)	35,000	35,000	36,000	36,000	38,000	44,000	40,000	46,000	42,000	48,000
Professional Development / Skill Development	4,350	4,350	4,500	4,500	4,750	5,550	5,000	6,825	5,400	8,250
Self-Evaluation & Infrastructure Development	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	10,000	35,000	15,000	30,000	25,000	10,000
Dissemination of Best Practices to Authorizers	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500
Charter School Support & Technical Assistance	115,000	115,000	115,000	115,000	120,000	131,000	123,000	140,000	127,000	150,000
Replication & Best Practice Dissemination	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	55,000	70,000	60,000	80,000	65,000	90,000
Membership / Dues	3,800	3,800	4,000	4,000	4,433	6,333	5,067	7,917	5,700	9,500
Office Supplies & Facility and Utilities*	600	600	600	600	700	1,000	800	1,250	900	1,500
Communications / Publications / Website	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	17,500	25,000	20,000	31,250	22,500	37,500
Mileage	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,750	2,500	2,000	3,125	2,250	3,750
Other / Miscellaneous	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	7,000	10,000	8,000	11,000	9,000	12,000
Total Expenditures	288,250	288,250	291,600	291,600	316,133	416,383	341,367	503,367	382,250	583,000
Net Income (Deficit)	7,265	7,265	3,915	3,915	12,084	9,940	19,552	4,712	11,371	6,833

*Excludes in-kind contributions; estimated collective minimum = \$150,000/annually

Notes:

Revenue based on SY2021 Formula Allowance (\$6,567).

Growth assumes an even mix of small, medium, large schools; consequently, revenue growth projections are based on mid-sized schools (\$16,351/school (166 PU), based on SY2021 Formual Allowance).