# UNIVERSITY OF St.Thomas

# CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZING PROGRAM MANUAL

# 2025-2026

School of Education

University of St. Thomas

Minneapolis, MN

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# I. ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

The University of St. Thomas (St. Thomas), founded in 1885 by Archbishop John Ireland, is a Catholic, independent, liberal arts, archdiocesan university that emphasizes values-centered, career-oriented education.  St. Thomas has been coeducational at the undergraduate level since 1977 and welcomes students of all ages and nationalities and from all religious, racial, ethnic and financial backgrounds.

When it established a new academic structure in 1990 with an undergraduate college and graduate schools, St. Thomas changed its name from college to university. It refined its academic structure in 2001 when it established academic divisions that brought together related graduate and undergraduate programs into common schools and colleges.  St. Thomas is currently the largest private university in Minnesota, with more than 10,000 undergraduate and graduate students and 110,000+ alumni.    The university boasts more than 150 majors and minors for undergraduates, as well as over 55 graduate degrees.  St. Thomas is arranged into eight schools and colleges including:

- College of Arts and Sciences;
- Opus College of Business;
- School of Law;
- School of Engineering;
- Morrison Family College of Health
- School of Education;
- Dougherty Family College; and
- St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity.

*U.S. News & World Report* most recently places St. Thomas as #148 in the national universities category, #23 in the best undergraduate engineering program nationally category, and #71 for best value nationally category.  Princeton Review rated St. Thomas #23 for top entrepreneurship undergraduate programs nationally. St. Thomas has also received recognition from the Niche.com, Sierra Magazine, and Poets and Quants.

St. Thomas is governed by a 36-member Board of Trustees and is a member of the Associated Colleges of the Twin Cities, a consortium of five private liberal arts colleges. Other members are Augsburg, St. Catherine, Hamline and Macalester.

**10 Year Aspirations**
The University of St. Thomas will advance to the level of excellence, impact and reputation that distinguishes the top 10 national Catholic universities.

**Mission**
Inspired by Catholic intellectual tradition, the University of St. Thomas educates students to be morally responsible leaders who think critically, act wisely, and work skillfully to advance the common good.

**Convictions**
As a community, St. Thomas is committed to the following: Pursuit of Truth, Academic Excellence, Faith and Reason, Dignity, Diversity, Personal Attention and Gratitude.

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# II. CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZING PHILOSOPHY

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The University of St. Thomas (St. Thomas) is dedicated to advancing the common good and strongly believes that improving educational opportunities and outcomes for the children who in live in our community is critical to accomplishing this goal. Over the past 60 years, St. Thomas has prepared educators to be moral leaders who think critically, act wisely, and work skillfully. In 2001, St. Thomas sponsored its first charter school and on December 28, 2010, St. Thomas was approved as a charter school authorizer by the state of Minnesota. The commitment of St. Thomas is to authorize charter schools whose vision and mission are compatible to that of the university, schools that are accountability-based, data-driven and result in effective learning for all children.

As articulated by our President Emeritus, St. Thomas strives to be 'in and of the city,' which means engaging with the surrounding community and working to advance the good beyond our traditional post-secondary educational programming. Authorizing charter schools has, and continues to be, a critical and impactful way for us to live our mission within the PK-12 education community.

To this end, St. Thomas has established a philosophy to guide its authorizing efforts in decisions to renew its existing charter schools, to authorize additional charter schools in the future, to allow expansion of existing charter schools, and to evaluate the ongoing performance of its authorized charter schools. This philosophy, and the policies used to implement it, ensure that St. Thomas establishes an authorizing relationship with only top-quality charter schools whose mission and purpose are in alignment with the vision, mission, core values and tenets that comprise St. Thomas's Authorizing Philosophy. St. Thomas's charter school authorizing philosophy is in accordance with *Minnesota (MN) Statute 124E.01 Subd. 1*, which states the primary purpose of charter schools is to improve all pupil learning and all student achievement. Additional purposes include to:

- Increase learning opportunities for pupils;
- Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
- Measure learning outcomes and create different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes;
- Establish new forms of accountability for schools; and
- Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program of the school site.

**Vision**
The vision of the University of St. Thomas Charter Authorizing Program is *to authorize excellent charters schools in order to increase quality educational opportunities for all children in the Twin Cities metro area. The University of St. Thomas Charter Authorizing Program strives to be a*

*national model for quality authorizing and schools' authorizer of choice based on our competence, transparency, and respect for school autonomy.*

**Mission**

The mission of the University of St. Thomas Charter Authorizing Program is *to advance the common good by using quality authorizing practices and cross-sector university expertise to oversee and promote the health of charter schools that demonstrably assist students in reaching their full academic and human potential.*

**Core Values**

The core values below further define the vision and articulate key characteristics of the Authorizing Program.

- **Whole Student**. We work with schools committed to developing the whole individual in a way that allows students to meet their full human potential. Our schools have an unwavering commitment to academics as well as a focus on growing well-rounded students who are community-minded, problem-solvers, and leaders in pursuing a just society for all. We honor this value through a balanced approach to evaluation that values qualitative and quantitative data.

- **Educational Equity**. We work with schools that are committed to improving educational outcomes for all students, particularly those who have traditionally been underserved and are most impacted by achievement and opportunity gaps. We honor this value by working with schools serving the community in which St. Thomas is located.

- **Portfolio of Options**. We work with schools that have an individual and local curricular focus that is unique and distinct in its ability to answer community needs. Our emphasis is quality and we prioritize outcomes and processes that respect students' dignity. We honor this value by authorizing a portfolio of schools with diverse educational philosophies and by making modifications to our metrics when necessary to allow rigorous and relevant measurement of success.

- **Empowered Autonomy**. We work with schools that desire high levels of autonomy and are willing to be held accountable using a transparent and comprehensive accountability framework. We believe decisions should be made at the lowest appropriate level and strive to ensure school-authorizer relations are based on mutual respect, trust, collaboration, and humility. We honor this value by allowing school leaders and boards the freedoms provided by the charter law while maintaining a focus on the outcomes agreed to in the charter contract.

- **Excellence-First Authorizing**. We work within our organization to uphold rigorous standards, ensure the stability of the program, and continually evaluate our own policies and practices to ensure excellence. We honor this value by maintaining a staff-to-school ratio of 1:6, communicating program presence and results to university constituencies, employing quality and sector-conscious strategies when considering portfolio growth, and undertaking regular internal review of our program.

- **Reflective Practitioners**. We work as practitioners to share what we learn with the broader community and be thoughtful seekers and recipients of new ideas. We strive to foster a

network among UST authorized charter schools that supports the sharing of best practices, offers technical assistance where appropriate, and facilitates collaboration while honoring school autonomy. We also seek to collaborate with our fellow authorizers and the charter community. We honor this value by dedicating time to research, interactions with sector organizations, professional development, hosting periodic gatherings for school leaders, and leveraging faculty and staff expertise.

**Tenets**

The following tenets highlight the characteristics St. Thomas seeks in the schools we authorize and guide our authorizing decisions and relationships.

- **Education that Promotes Moral Responsibility**. St. Thomas believes that it is a necessary role for its charter schools to demonstrate the ability to use an ethical framework in decision-making. Educators must process, articulate, and act from a reasoned, ethically grounded educational philosophy. Leaders of these charter schools demonstrate a strong sense of social justice, emanating from a well-reasoned ethical perspective that supports the basic tents of a democratic society.

- **Education That Promotes Critical Thinking**. St. Thomas believes that educators must employ critical thinking skills about the theory and practice of schools, reflecting broad understandings in humanities, social sciences, and current events. Students need to develop basic skills in literacy and numeracy to develop the skills to think critically. In addition, each school that St. Thomas authorizes must commit to a curriculum that helps students identify important elements of a problem situation, gather needed information from a variety of sources and analyze data for insight and decision-making.

- **Education that Promotes Wise Action**. St. Thomas expects its charter schools to create and maintain a culture for learning marked by practices that promote broad participation on the part of all constituents in the school community. It is through this process of teamwork and collegiality that wise action emerges in determining the best policies and practices to promote student learning. St. Thomas believes that wise action on the part of a school is the result of engaging students, staff, parents and the community at large in continuing dialogue that will inform the vision, mission, policies and procedures of the charter school.

- **Education that Promotes Skillful Work**. St. Thomas believes that charter schools are a viable option for families who wish to provide the best possible educational opportunities for their children. Therefore, charter schools authorized by St. Thomas should establish a track record of skillful work on the part of students, including student achievement marked by excellence in relation to other schools in their neighborhood, city, state and the national. St. Thomas will not enter into an authorizing relationship with schools who lack a commitment to providing a higher quality learning program, one which the skills of students are established at a high level and are assessed and analyzed regularly.

- **Education that Advances the Common Good**. St. Thomas is committed to working with children and families in need, ones who have traditionally been left behind while other segments of society have thrived. Currently, many students are not served well by the traditional public school system. Some of these students fit the traditional "at-risk" profile,

but many others have been pushed to the margins of educational programming for reasons such as unique learning styles, lack of social skills and nonconformity. St. Thomas seeks to advance the common good through the authorization of charter schools who demonstrate a commitment to fairness and equity for all students, no matter their social status.

# III. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

**St. Thomas President's Advisory Council**
The President of the University of St. Thomas serves as the final decision maker and agent for the University in executing the contracts with charter schools. The President's Advisory Council serves to advise the President in matters related to the University's vision and mission, including the role that authorizing charter schools has in the overall mission of the University. The President uses input from the Advisory Council to act upon recommendations made by the Charter Accountability Board. This level of involvement by the President and senior University policy makers demonstrates the University's institutional commitment to promoting the common good through educational innovation.

The President's Advisory Council consists of:
- Vice President of Student Affairs
- Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Chief Financial Officer
- Vice President for University and Governmental Relations
- Executive Vice President, Chief Administrative Officer
- Executive Adviser to the President
- Vice President for Mission

## St. Thomas Charter Accountability Board

The Charter Accountability Board (CAB) is made up of between six and ten full-voting members, with the Dean of the School of Education and the Director of Charter School Authorizing serving as ex officio members. This board is charged with providing oversight to each of the charter schools that the University authorizes and with making recommendations to the University's Executive Vice President/Chief Academic Officer for adding charter schools to its network of authorized schools.

Current members are listed below with their area of expertise in parentheses:
- Mufaddal H. Baxamusa, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Board Member (Finance)
- Ms. Sarah McCann, Associate Dean Academics, Dougherty Family College
- Dr. John Spry, Professor and Board Member (Finance)
- Dr. Lynn Stansberry-Brusnahan, Assistant Professor and Board Member (Special Education)
- Dr. Aura Wharton-Beck, Department of Education Leadership, School of Education
- Ms. Molly McGraw Healy, Senior Director of Strategic Partnerships
- Dr. Amy Smith, Dean of the School of Education and ex officio member
- Ms. Terry Moffatt, Director of Charter School Authorizing and ex officio Board Member
- Ms. Danielle Miller, Charter School Authorizing Program Manager II and ex officio Board Member
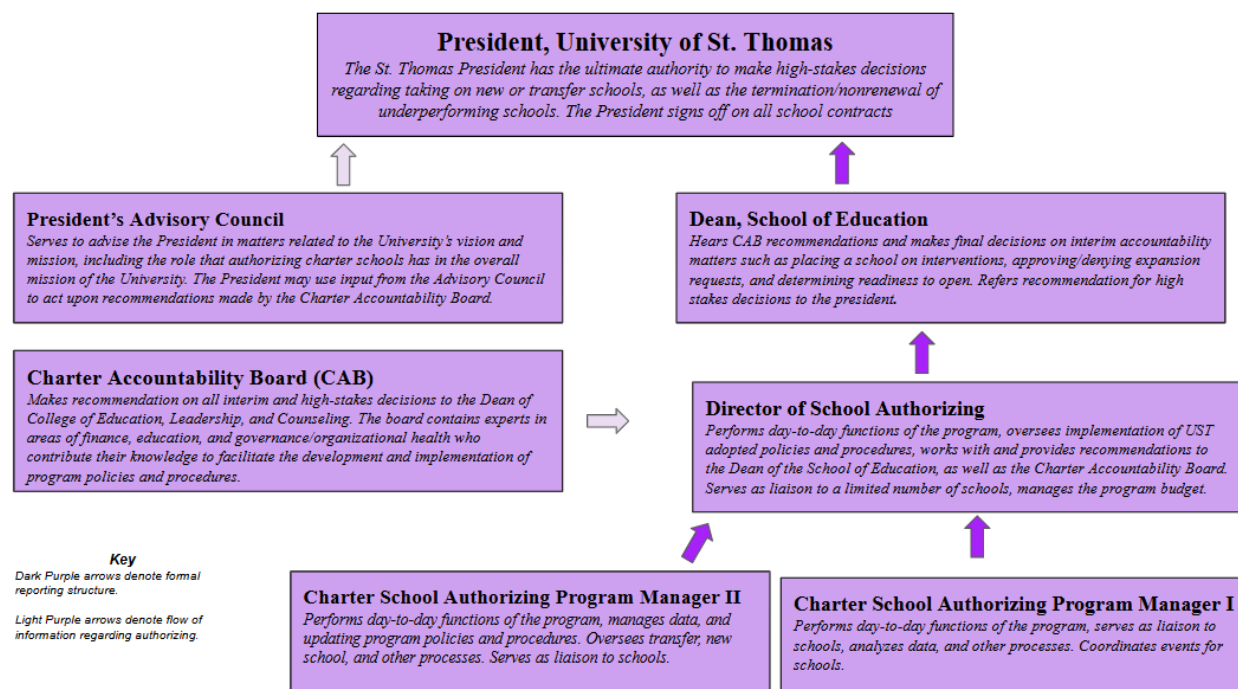
- Mr. Sean Sonderman, Charter School Authorizing Program Manager I and ex officio Board Member

## Charter Authorizing Program Staff

St. Thomas currently employs three staff members: Director of Charter School Authorizing, Charter School Authorizing Program Manager II, and a Charter School Authorizing Program Manager I. The Director is responsible for the leadership and day-to-day management of the Charter School Authorizing Program. The Director of Charter School Authorizing, with support from the Program Managers, assumes the responsibilities of communication and coordination with staff and administrators at schools and other community organizations to facilitate oversight of schools authorized by the University of St. Thomas.

## Structure of Duties and Responsibilities

Please see our organizational chart below, which provides responsibilities and decision-making authority. As noted above, changes in portfolio size will result in increases to internal or external capacity to maintain staffing ratio of 1:6 or better.

**President, University of St. Thomas**
*The St. Thomas President has the ultimate authority to make high-stakes decisions regarding taking on new or transfer schools, as well as the termination/nonrenewal of underperforming schools. The President signs off on all school contracts*

**President's Advisory Council**
*Serves to advise the President in matters related to the University's vision and mission, including the role that authorizing charter schools has in the overall mission of the University. The President may use input from the Advisory Council to act upon recommendations made by the Charter Accountability Board.*

**Dean, School of Education**
*Hears CAB recommendations and makes final decisions on interim accountability matters such as placing a school on interventions, approving/denying expansion requests, and determining readiness to open. Refers recommendation for high stakes decisions to the president.*

**Charter Accountability Board (CAB)**
*Makes recommendation on all interim and high-stakes decisions to the Dean of College of Education, Leadership, and Counseling. The board contains experts in areas of finance, education, and governance/organizational health who contribute their knowledge to facilitate the development and implementation of program policies and procedures.*

**Director of School Authorizing**
*Performs day-to-day functions of the program, oversees implementation of UST adopted policies and procedures, works with and provides recommendations to the Dean of the School of Education, as well as the Charter Accountability Board. Serves as liaison to a limited number of schools, manages the program budget.*

**Key**
Dark Purple arrows denote formal reporting structure.

Light Purple arrows denote flow of information regarding authorizing.

**Charter School Authorizing Program Manager II**
*Performs day-to-day functions of the program, manages data, and updating program policies and procedures. Oversees transfer, new school, and other processes. Serves as liaison to schools.*

**Charter School Authorizing Program Manager I**
*Performs day-to-day functions of the program, serves as liaison to schools, analyzes data, and other processes. Coordinates events for schools.*

# IV. APPLICATION TO START A NEW CHARTER SCHOOL

Welcome to the University of St. Thomas (St. Thomas) application to start a new school process. We appreciate your consideration of St. Thomas as authorizer for your proposed school and are hopeful that you will find the application questions useful as you finalize your model. The St. Thomas Charter School Authorizing Program provides students with high quality choices in public education in charter schools that it authorizes. St. Thomas is committed to the core principles of charter schools and charter school authorizing, including the idea of autonomy in exchange for accountability. To that end, we are guided by a philosophy that values high standards in the academic, financial, and organizational outcomes achieved by our schools and ensures that St. Thomas-authorized charter schools will:

- Promote Moral Responsibility
- Promote Critical Thinking
- Promote Wise Action
- Promote Skillful Work
- Advance the Common Good

St. Thomas is pleased to accept applications for all types of charter schools without restrictions on the type of model, curriculum, or location of the proposed school, so long as they demonstrate alignment with our mission and the authorizing philosophy articulated in our Charter School Authorizing Program Manual. We are currently prioritizing applications for schools located in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

An individual or group of individuals interested in starting a charter school are invited to apply to St. Thomas for authorization per *MN Statutes 124E.06*. Instructions for completing and submitting an application for a new charter school follow. Please see the Review Process, Evaluation Rubric and Frequently Asked Questions sections for additional details. While the content of new school applications is the responsibility of the founding team, feel free to contact us with any questions about the process or clarifications around any of the application sections.

Thank you for your interest in St. Thomas, and for your desire to provide Minnesota's children with an excellent education

## Timeline

Please note that the timelines included are intended to provide an idea of the general process and may vary from one review cycle to the next. Updated timelines are available by contacting the Director of Charter School Authorizing, or by checking the St. Thomas Charter Authorizing Program website.

| Date | Action |
|------|--------|
| 1st Friday in November | St. Thomas Application Posted |
| 2nd Friday in January | Letter of Intent Due to St. Thomas |

| January 15 – January 31 | Pre-Application Meeting and Interview |
|---|---|
| 3rd Friday in February | Applicants invited to submit a full application are notified.  Applicants not selected to submit an application are notified. |
| **1st Monday in June** | **Full Applications Due to St. Thomas** |
| 1st Monday in June – 2nd Friday in July | Applications reviewed by teams of internal and external experts, feedback on each application is consolidated. |
| 2nd Friday in July | Applicants recommended for further consideration are notified of opportunity to interview in-person at St. Thomas's Minneapolis Campus, located at 1000 LaSalle Avenue in downtown Minneapolis. Applicants not selected to move forward are notified. |
| July 15 – July 31 | Applicant Interviews |
| August | St. Thomas Charter Accountability Board moves to approve or deny new school applications. Recommendation of Charter Accountability Board sent to Dean of the School of Education, and St. Thomas President for final approval.  Applicants not selected to move forward are notified. |
| On or before the 1st Friday in September | Upon final approval from St. Thomas leadership, official notification will be provided to the charter school founding team and an affidavit to the MN Department of Education will be prepared and submitted. |

Minnesota's Charter School Law (*MN Statutes § 124E.06*) states that: *An authorizer must file an affidavit at least 14 months before July 1 of the year the new charter school plans to serve students. The affidavit must state the terms and conditions under which the authorizer would charter a school, including a market need and demand study. The commissioner must approve or disapprove the authorizer's affidavit within 60 business days of receipt of the affidavit. If the commissioner disapproves the affidavit, the commissioner shall notify the authorizer of the deficiencies in the affidavit and the authorizer then has 20 business days to address the deficiencies. The commissioner must notify the authorizer of final approval or final disapproval within 15 business days after receiving the authorizer's response to the deficiencies in the affidavit. If the authorizer does not address deficiencies to the commissioner's satisfaction, the commissioner's disapproval is final. Failure to obtain commissioner approval precludes an authorizer from chartering the school that is the subject of this affidavit.*

## Instructions

As described in detail under the Application Elements section, St. Thomas's new school application process includes two parts: a letter of intent and a full application.  Instructions for formatting and submitting each part follows:

**Formatting and Submitting Letter of Intent**
The Letter of Intent must be completed using the Letter of Intent Form (Attachment A) and formatted as follows:

- Letter of intent must be typed and single spaced with a minimum 11-point font size.
- Letter of intent must be submitted in Microsoft Word or PDF format.

Please email one copy (PDF or Microsoft Word format) of the Letter of Intent to:

tmoffatt@stthomas.edu

To be considered, the letter of intent must be received by the deadline specified for the desired application cycle (see the Timeline section).

**Formatting and Submitting of Full Application**
The Application must be completed using the formatting and submittal instructions that follow:

- Application must be typed and single or 1.5 spaced on white 8.5''X 11'' paper with 1-inch page margins and a minimum 11-point font size.
- Application must be submitted in MS Word or PDF format.
- Use large font, bold, italics, underlining, or another consistent method of making headings clear to the reader.
- Page numbers must be provided throughout the document.
- Clearly label each section and subsection of the application contained in the Narrative/Work Plan (i.e.: II. School Foundation, A. Need & Demand, etc.).
- Provide a table of contents at the start of the application listing the page where each section and sub-section can be found.
- Clearly label each attachment with its number and title (i.e.: Attachment #1 – Founders Contact List).
- Attachments do not count toward page limits.
- Properly cite any sources that are referenced using MLA, APA, or another commonly accepted format.
- Prior to submitting an application, please ensure that you are familiar with the MN Charter School Law (*MN Statutes §124E*) and MN Open Meeting Law (*MN Statutes Chapter 13D*).
- If a particular question does not apply to your proposal, please state, "not applicable," and provide a brief rationale.

Please also submit via email one electronic copy (PDF or Microsoft Word format) to:

tmoffatt@stthomas.edu

The electronic application must be received by the submission deadline in order for the application to be considered. Receipt of complete applications will be confirmed within two business days of the submission deadline.

## Application Elements

As noted in the instructions above, St. Thomas's new school application process includes two parts: a letter of intent and a full application. A description of the required content for the letter of intent and full application is provided below.

**Letter of Intent**

The Letter of Intent must be completed using the *Letter of Intent Form* (Attachment A).  The form asks applicants to provide information on the following:

- Proposed school information,
- Lead and secondary applicant information,
- Proposed affiliations with Charter Management Organizations (CMOs), Education Management Organizations (EMOs), third party service providers or other significant partners, if applicable,
- Proposed enrollment,
- Program design,
- School governance and management, and
- School location and facility plans.

**Full Application**

Below are the elements that must be included in the application narrative, budget, and appendices. Follow instructions carefully and do not exceed the page maximums. Please use section and sub-section outline headings throughout your application.  The chart below summarizes the elements and page limits.  A detailed description of each element follows.

| Narrative and Budget Elements | Page Limit |
|---|---|
| **Cover Sheet** (Use template under Attachment B) | NA |
| I.    **Executive Summary** | 5 |
| II.    **School Foundation**<br>A.  Need & Demand<br>B.  Vision & Mission<br>C.  Purpose & Key Design Elements<br>D.  Alignment with St. Thomas Chartering Philosophy<br>E.  School Founders & Proposed Board Members | 40 |
| III.    **Academic Success**<br>A.  Learning Program and Student Achievement<br>B.  School Culture and Discipline<br>C.  Assessment & Accountability | 50 |
| IV.    **Governance and Operations**<br>A.  Governance<br>B.  Staffing and Management<br>C.  School Calendar<br>D.  Facility Plan<br>E.  Transportation Plan | 30 |
| V.    **Budget and Financial Sustainability**<br>A.  Enrollment, Marketing & Outreach<br>B.  Budget and Financial Planning<br>C.  Financial Oversight | 25 |
| VI.    **Additional Information For Existing Operators Only**<br>A.  Selection and Oversight of Educational Service Provider<br>B.  ESP's Current Network, Mission, and Strategic Vision | NA |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | C. Proposed Relationship Between ESP and Charter School | |
| **VII.** | **Pre-Operational Action Plan** | NA |
| | **TOTAL PAGES** | **150** |
| **VIII.** | **Attachments** | |
| 1. | Founder Contact List (see attached template) | NA |
| 2. | Founding Group Resumes | NA |
| 3. | Founder & Board Member Conflict of Interest Forms (see attached template) | NA |
| 4. | Criminal Background Check Release Forms (see attached template) | NA |
| 5. | Evidence of Community Engagement | NA |
| 6. | Evidence of Student and Family Demand | NA |
| 7. | Evidence of Community Support | NA |
| 8. | 501(c)(3) Letter of Determination, Articles of Incorporation & Bylaws | NA |
| 9. | Month-by-Month Pre-Operational Action Plan | NA |
| *Existing Operators Only:* | | |
| 10. | ESP Complete Portfolio Academic Record | NA |
| 11. | ESP Financial Statements | NA |
| 12. | Disclosure of Current/Past Litigation Involving ESP or operated charters | NA |
| 13. | Proposed Contract Between ESP and Charter | NA |

## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Provides a *1-5-page* overview of the school that is planned. Summarize the proposed school's:

- Genesis (how and why did the founding team come together, and the process used to prepare for the submission),
- Mission and vision
- Need(s) the school intends to address that are currently not being met in the community in which the school will be located.
- Statutory purpose(s),
- Grade levels to be served and the total number of students per grade (at full capacity),
- Target population (who does the school anticipate serving),
- Intended location and rationale for selection,
- Key program design elements,
- Educational philosophy and instructional approach, and evidence of community support including how parents/guardians and community members are engaged in the application development process.

## II. SCHOOL FOUNDATION

### A. Need & Demand

Presents a compelling reason for establishing the new charter school which includes the proposed locations of the school that supports **all** of the proposed grades, sites, and programs:

1. Provide analysis of the community and target population that includes:
   - Current and projected demographic information;
   - Student enrollment patterns
   - Information on existing schools and types of educational programs currently available;

- Characteristics of proposed students and families;
- Availability of properly zoned and classified facilities; and
- Quantification of existing demand for the school or site.

2. Provide a <u>description and evidence</u> of the need and demand for a school in the location identified that includes:
   - Strategies and interactions the founding team has had to date with youth, parents and community partners designed to solicit community input regarding the educational and programmatic needs of students and the proposed development of the school (submit supporting documents under Attachment 5 e.g. flyers, websites, social media pages, meeting announcements, sign-in sheets, survey results, etc.);
   - Summary and analysis of evidence indicating students and families would consider enrolling in the school (submit supporting documents under Attachment 6); and
   - Discussion of community support for an additional school in this area (submit supporting documents under Attachment7 e.g. letters of support, emails, survey results, etc.).

3. Indicate how the new school addresses one or more Minnesota Statewide Goals under the Federal Charter Schools program (CSP) Grant Project.[1]

**B. Vision and Mission**
Provides vision and mission statements that reflect the school's goals and purpose. Alignment with University of St. Thomas the Authorizing Program's mission is present.

1. Vision: Provide a vision statement that outlines what the school wants to be (something to be pursued).

2. Mission: Provide a mission statement that outlines what the school is now (something to be accomplished).

**C. Purpose and Key Design Elements**
Presents how the new charter school is innovative and how the school supports two or more statutory purposes for charter schools (including the primary purpose).

1. Identify one or more of the statutory purposes for charter schools the school intends to meet (see Minn. Stat. § 124E, subd. 1 (2024)) and provide a comprehensive description of how the school's vision and mission are connected to the identified purpose(s).

2. Based on the need identified above, provide a clear and concise overview of the school's design elements (i.e. those aspects of the school critical to its success).
   - Highlight the new and unique characteristics this school would provide to students that distinguish it from other education options available to students.

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[1] Developers will need to provide this information when applying to MDE for the Federal Start-Up aid.

- Provide an analysis of any research, evidence of effectiveness or example of existing programs, which support the selection of these elements.

**D. Alignment with St. Thomas Charter School Philosophy**

St. Thomas will authorize only those charter schools that are aligned with our mission, core values and one or more of the tenets of our Charter School Authorizing Philosophy, listed below. Describe how the school you are proposing be authorized by St. Thomas aligns the Charter Authorizing Philosophy mission, core values and tenets.

**Mission**

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**Core Values**

- *Whole Student.* We work with schools committed to developing the whole individual in a way that allows students to meet their full human potential. Our schools have an unwavering commitment to academics as well as a focus on growing well-rounded students who are community-minded, problem-solvers, and leaders in pursuing a just society for all. We honor this value through a balanced approach to evaluation that values qualitative and quantitative data.

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- *Education that promotes Critical Thinking*.  St. Thomas believes that educators must employ critical thinking skills about the theory and practice of schooling, reflecting broad understandings in humanities, social sciences and current events. Students need to develop basic skills in literacy and numeracy to develop the skills to think critically.  In addition, each school that St. Thomas authorizes must commit to a curriculum that helps students identify important elements of a problem situation, gather needed information from a variety of sources and analyze data for insight and decision-making.

- *Education that promotes Wise Action*.  St. Thomas expects its charter schools to create and maintain a culture for learning marked by practices that promote broad participation on the part of all constituents in the school community. It is through this process of teamwork and collegiality that wise action emerges in determining the best policies and practices to promote student learning.  St. Thomas believes that wise action on the part of a school is the result of engaging students, staff, parents and the community at large in continuing dialogue that will inform the vision, mission, policies and procedures of the charter school.

- *Education that promotes Skillful Work*.  St. Thomas believes that charter schools are a viable option for families who wish to provide the best possible educational opportunities for their children.  Therefore, charter schools authorized by St. Thomas should establish a track record of skillful work on the part of the students, including student achievement marked by excellence in relation to other schools in their neighborhood, city, state and nation. St. Thomas will not enter an authorizing relationship with schools who lack a commitment to providing a higher quality learning program, one in which the skills of students are established at a high level

and are assessed and analyzed regularly. Our accountability expectations, found elsewhere in this Authorizing Guide, illustrate this commitment to high standards for skillful work and high student achievement by students in St. Thomas's charter schools.

- *Education that Advances the Common Good.* St. Thomas is committed to working with children and families in need, ones who have traditionally been left behind while other segments of society have thrived. Currently, many students are not served well by the traditional public-school system. Some of these students fit the traditional "at-risk" profile, but many others have been pushed to the margins of educational programming for reasons such as unique learning styles, lack of social skills and nonconformity. St. Thomas's mission is to advance the common good through the authorization of charter schools who demonstrate a commitment to fairness and equity for all students, no matter their social or economic background.

### E. School Founders & Proposed Board Members
Describes the school founders/proposed board members and how they are well positioned to develop and plan a new high-quality charter school.

1. Describe how the founding team came together to propose this school.

2. For each School Founder/ Board Member, include the following information:
   - Describe their experience and/or involvement in K-12 education;
   - Describe their experience with the design and operation of a charter school;
   - Describe their role in the planning process to date and their expected role and responsibilities during the school's pre-operational planning period;
   - Describe their experience and/or involvement with the community the school proposes to serve;
   - Indicate whether they intend to become a member of the interim Board of Directors;
   - Indicate if they intend to apply for employment in the new charter school; and
   - Describe the relevant work experience and expertise they bring to the founding team.

3. Disclose which members of the founding team have played a role in crafting the application narrative. If a consultant or employee of an Education Service Provider was used, disclose his/her name and experience.

Provide as Attachments #1-4, the Founders Contact List form followed by a full resume and completed/signed Conflict of Interest and Background Check Release form for each of the individuals named. These templates are included under Attachment B.

## III. ACADEMIC SUCCESS

### A. Learning Program and Student Achievement
Presents a high-quality educational program and goals for student achievement.

1. Educational Philosophy, Curricula, Tools, Methods and Instructional Techniques:
   - Describe the guiding educational philosophy of this school and basic learning environment.
   - Provide an overview and rationale for selection of the proposed curricula (including names of textbook sequences selected or under consideration), tools (including specialized technology if applicable), methods and instructional techniques that support the educational philosophy.
   - Cite and explain research evidence demonstrating how these curricula, tools, techniques and methods support student achievement (if applicable, identify schools involved).
   - Describe the process the school will use to ensure the curricula will align with Minnesota's K-12 Academic Standards and, if PK students will be served, the state's Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPS). See the Minnesota Department of Education Website for additional information at: https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/stds/ & https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/early/ .
   - Identify the contribution this charter school will make in assisting educationally and economically disadvantaged and other students to succeed academically.
   - Identify class sizes and structures including the maximum number of students in any one classroom (by grade if varied) and number/roles of adults outside of special education paraprofessionals (i.e.: team teaching structure, single teacher, teacher with classroom aide, etc.).
   - If not covered above, describe how the systems of the school, as well as those of classroom teachers, will support and meet the diverse learning needs of individual students.
   - Describe how the school will promote graduation for all students, including those at risk and those with special needs.
   - Schools serving preschool/prekindergarten students only: Address how the program will assess each child's cognitive skills with a comprehensive child assessment instrument when the child enters, and before the child leaves the program, to inform program planning and promote kindergarten readiness. Describe how the school will ensure participating children have completed health and developmental screening within 90 days of program enrollment under *MN Statutes section 121A.16 to 121A.19*. Describe the handling of the transition to kindergarten.
   - Blended learning schools and virtual schools only: If your school plans to supply instruction to students through virtual distance learning, online technology, or computer-based instruction, please provide specific information on the number of hours students will spend receiving this type of instruction, how progress will be tracked, what curricular/software programs will be used, and by whom students will be overseen throughout the day.

2. Special Populations
   Pursuant to federal and state laws, charter schools are required to serve and meet the needs of all students, including those with special needs. School personnel must participate in developing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), identify and refer students for assessment of special education needs, maintain appropriate records,

and cooperate in the delivery of special education instruction and services in the least restrictive environment.

- Include a description of the proposed Child Find process that will be used at this school and the safeguards that will be put in place to avoid misidentification.
- Describe how this school will provide services to students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. Specify:
  - o The specific instructional programs or practices to be used;
  - o How the school will ensure access to the general education curriculum;
  - o Plans for monitoring and evaluating progress toward IEP goals; and
  - o Staffing plans to meet student needs.

3. Students with Limited English Proficiency
   Pursuant to federal and state laws, charter schools are required to support the learning of multilingual students in attainment of English language proficiency in English and state academic content standards. Describe how this school will provide services to English Learners (ELs). Specify:
   - How ELs will be identified;
   - Enrollment, initial placement and continuing placement process;
   - Exit processes and procedures;
   - The specific instructional programs or practices to be used including usage of WIDA English Language Development Standards;
   - How student progress and success will be monitored; and
   - Staffing plans to meet student needs.
   - The school's process to render language assistance to students and adults who communicate in a language other than English

4. Gifted and At-Risk Students
   Explain how the school will identify and serve students who are intellectually gifted or are performing below grade level/are at-risk but do not qualify for special education or other services.

5. Supplemental Programming
   If the school will provide summer school, extra-curricular offerings, or other supplemental programs that are integral to the mission of the school, please describe:
   - What offerings will entail
   - How often they will occur/how long they will run
   - How they will be funded

## B. School Culture and Discipline
1. Describe the culture of the proposed school and how this culture will be implemented.

2. Describe the philosophy that will surround the school's discipline policy, as well as the policy itself. If the policy has not yet been developed, include information on how and when this work will be completed.

## C. Assessment and Accountability

St. Thomas requires that the schools we authorize be held to a high academic standard. We develop an accountability plan with the school that includes goals based on state standardized test scores as well as other nationally normed assessments, all of which are contained in the St. Thomas Accountability Plan and Rubric. In addition, we request the following information about the school's commitment to assessment and accountability.

1. Describe the school's philosophical approach to assessment.
2. Describe the systems to be used in managing and disseminating student performance data in terms of processes, software (if applicable) and personnel.
3. Describe any training and support that school leadership and teachers will receive in analyzing, interpreting, and utilizing student data.
4. Describe how the school will use assessment data to drive decisions about the learning program and strategic direction of the school.
5. Identify your school's mission-specific quantifiable academic goals for students and the school.
6. Discuss how the school will know if it is successfully educating students.

## IV. GOVERNANCE & OPERATIONS

### A. Governance

Describes a plan to ensure effective and accountable governance over the school's operations.

1. Governance Model
   - Describe the Board's governance model/Board composition and how it will help advance the mission of the school. If the Board plans to utilize any committees, advisory bodies, or councils, provide information on their composition (i.e.: parents, staff, community, teacher, etc.) and their reporting structure in relation to the school leadership team and governing Board.
   - Describe the school Board's finance committee including the composition, frequency of meeting, and its role in reviewing and making recommendations to the Board on financial health and best practices. (124E.07subd.6)
   - Describe the roles and responsibilities of the Board and how each member will help advance this understanding.
   - Describe how the role of the Board will be distinguished from the role of the School Leader.
   - Include information on the Board's schedule both during the founding period and after the start of the school. How often has the Board met? How often does it plan to meet during and after the founding period? Etc.

2. Board Recruitment: Describe specific expertise/characteristics sought in yet-to-be-recruited Board Members and explain the added value of those characteristics. Also describe how the school plans to recruit members with desired characteristics in an ongoing fashion.

3. Board Training: Describe the plan for initial training of the Board during the school's pre-operational planning period and for ongoing Board training and development once the school opens.

4. Parent, Family, and Community Involvement: Describe the Board's strategy for engaging and involving parents of potential students (including stepparents, guardians, etc.) and other members of the community in the planning, program design, and implementation of this charter school.

5. Plan for Fulfilling Board Obligations
   • Describe how the interim Board will develop policy during the pre-operational planning period to ensure the Board governs the charter public school in compliance with federal, state and local requirements.
   • Additionally, describe the specific plan and timeline for the development of:
     o Personnel policies (including the creation of job descriptions, an employee performance management program, etc.);
     o Procurement policies and procedures for contracting with vendors and consultants that are fair and open and that avoid apparent and actual conflicts of interest;
     o Conflict of interest policies; and
     o Travel approval and reimbursement policies.
     o If the founding team has already received 501(c)3 status, provide the Letter of Determination from the Internal Revenue Service, copy of the Articles of Incorporation, and signed Board Bylaws as Attachment 6. If the founding team has not received this status, indicate the anticipated timeline for doing so.

B. **Staffing and Management**
   Describes a plan to ensure effective and transparent management of the school's operations.

1. Provide an organizational chart for the proposed charter school, distinguishing between governance (Board), management School Leader) and other proposed school employees. Include key responsibilities for each position.

2. Include a staffing plan for the first contract period (pre-operational through the first five years of school operation). How will the school build its leadership, operations, and teaching staff?

3. Describe how, and on what timeline, the school will evaluate the performance of teachers and school leadership. Include references as to who will conduct the various evaluations and how unsatisfactory performance will be handled.

4. Explain how this organizational structure is consistent with the mission and vision of the proposed charter school.

5. Describe the fair and open process the interim Board will use for recruiting and hiring the School Leader, including:

- The timeline for developing a job description for the School Leader and then recruiting and hiring the School Leader;
- How the Board will recruit potential candidates who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age or disability; and
- Whether the Board plans to hire a temporary start-up coordinator and, if so, how this person will be identified.

6. Describe the school's strategy and process and timeline for recruiting and hiring other school employees, including teachers that are qualified to effectively serve the unique needs of the projected student population.
7. Outline the school's procedures for conducting background checks of employees and others.

8. Describe how the school will provide employees with initial and ongoing orientation and professional development about the mission, vision and outcomes of the school.

9. Provide information regarding the general professional development teachers and others will receive prior to the start of the first school year as well as the training topics the school plans to cover during its initial year of operation.

10. Describe the school's compensation strategy, particularly for teachers and leadership. This section should clearly align with the provided budget and narrative.

## C. School Calendar and Schedule
Describes a calendar and schedule that reflects the school's goals, purposes and proposed learning program.

1. Describe the calendar the school plans to use:
- Identify the unique characteristics of the school's proposed calendar.
- Describe how this proposed calendar lends itself to the school's mission, vision, and needs of the students being served.
- Provide total number of student instructional days, instructional minutes, and professional development days.
- Provide a copy of the school's proposed calendar for the first year of operation.
- Provide a description or outline of a "typical day" at the new school.
- Provide a school-wide 'master' schedule that is aligned to the program described at anticipated enrollment levels and clearly shows:
  - Arrival and dismissal times
  - Duration of various periods
  - Time devoted to each subject area
  - Number of classrooms at anticipated enrollment level
  - Teacher preparatory periods
  - Student lunch/recess periods

Keep in mind that the school-wide schedule provides an opportunity to demonstrate that the structure of the program described in your application narrative is realistic and feasible. If your program involves the use of specialists (art, music, language, etc.), be sure they are included. Applicants may include a sample schedule for a week, or for 'A' and 'B' days if rotations will occur. If certain grade levels (ie: PK or K) will have a schedule that diverges from those of other students, ensure that this is reflected.

**D. Facility Plan**
Describes a plan to secure a suitable facility that meets the unique needs of the school and complies with health and safety and building code requirements.

1. Facility Needs Planning Process
   - Describe the school's plan, including the timeline and process, for determining space needs appropriate to the program and enrollment.
   - Describe results of a preliminary facility needs assessment including the number of classrooms, common areas, recreational space, and other specialized spaces.

2. Facility Selection Process
   - Describe the school's plan, including the timeline, process and milestones to be met in locating and evaluating potential facilities and selecting a building for lease that is affordable, provides adequate space and meets all health and safety and public building code requirements.
   - Provide a description of any potential facility or facilities that have been identified.

**E. Transportation Plan**
Describes a plan to provide transportation that meets the needs of the school and complies with Minnesota law.

1. Transportation Options
   - If the school will provide its own transportation, describe the school's plan, including the timeline, process and milestones to be met in locating and evaluating potential transportation providers.
   - If the resident school district will provide transportation for the school, describe any potential impacts on the school's learning program and school calendar.

2. Transportation Policies
   - Describe the school's policy for providing transportation to special populations
   - Describe the school's policy for providing transportation to students that live outside the resident district.

## V. BUDGET & FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

**A. Marketing, Outreach, Enrollment & Admissions**

Describes a marketing and outreach plan, based on the compelling need established above, to ensure open access to all and full enrollment.

1. Identify the number of students expected to attend the school each year by grade level in the following table (add additional rows if it will take more than five years to reach full enrollment).

| Year of Operation | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 | Full Enrollment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| K | | | | | | |
| 1 | | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | | |
| 7 | | | | | | |
| 8 | | | | | | |
| 9 | | | | | | |
| 10 | | | | | | |
| 11 | | | | | | |
| 12 | | | | | | |

(Left vertical label: Students Per Grade Level)

2. Describe your rationale for the growth plan depicted above (i.e.: Why start with the grade levels identified? The number of students identified?)

3. Describe your school's marketing strategy for recruiting and retaining the school's target population.

4. Discuss how this school will intentionally and specifically conduct outreach to educationally and economically disadvantaged and hard-to-reach populations.

5. Describe how you will engage families and community members from the time that the school is approved through opening.

6. Describe how the school will conduct an open admissions process including the use of a lottery to provide equal access to all students who apply.

B. **Budget and Financial Planning**
Describes a plan to ensure the financial viability of the school and effective management of budget and finances.

1. Five-Year Operational Budget
Present a Five-Year Operational Budget to provide reviewers with an understanding of the proposed operational budget needed to guide and control the use of public funds for the benefit of students at the new charter school (see attached template).

The Five-Year Operational Budget will be evaluated against the following criteria:
- Standard One: Qualities of sound financial management are present.
  - 1.1 Assumptions guiding the budget development process are defensible.
    - Enrollment estimates are based upon sound interest surveys and marketing data.
    - A valid data source for assumptions about student characteristic data is described.
    - Current and historical data assist in shaping revenue and expenditure increases and inflation assumptions.
  - 1.2 Financial management strategies reflect abilities to adapt to changing fiscal conditions.
    - Budget balancing and cost-containment strategies address potential enrollment changes.
    - Replacement and improvement costs for technology, capital and supplies are adequately addressed.
- Standard Two: Qualities of a healthy budget are present.
  - 2.1 There is a positive general fund balance in each of the five years.
    - The budget for each year has an increasing general fund balance.
    - A fund balance exists even if inaccuracies are corrected.
  - 2.2 The budget reflects only general fund items.
  - 2.3 Enrollment and staffing projections are consistently used throughout all sections of the application.
- Standard Three: The budget supports a quality school plan.
  - 3.1 The budget contains a justification for each service option listed in the application.
    - The narrative elements of the application are completed for each option.
    - Each option requiring budget data is consistently described throughout the application.
  - 3.2 Some expenditures support the uniqueness of the school mission.
    - Special curricular expenditures are clearly supported in the narrative.
    - The budget contains unique and realistic staffing patterns.

2. Budget Narrative

   Provide a comprehensive budget narrative that provides strong assumptions guiding the use of numbers and provides rationales and substantive documentation for the use of those numbers (e.g. federal funds and start-up funds are/are not included in the budget).

   - If grant or philanthropic funds are placed in the budget, have these funds been secured?  If so, include a letter of verification; if not, address how the school will cover anticipated expenses without the grant/philanthropic funds.
   - Address the timeline the school intends to follow in applying for Charter School Program Grant start-up funds and what the school's contingency plan would be if funds are not received.

3. Budget Development and Financial Planning
   2. Describe the process the Board and school leadership will use to develop and approve the annual budget, including (1) who will be involved, (2) how needs

will be identified and weighed, (3) timeline for creating and approving budgets, and (4) procedures and intervals for monitoring and modifying budgets.

### C. Financial Oversight
- Describe the policies and procedures the school will use to ensure that taxpayer dollars are appropriately used and accounted for. This includes procedures for managing accounting, payroll, purchasing, and the annual audit.
- Describe the process the Board and school leadership will use to monitor the financial condition of the school.
- If the school intends to hire an external financial manager or other support, include this information and how potential contractors and the auditor will be selected.

## VI. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR EXISTING OPERATORS ONLY

### A. Selection and Oversight of Educational Service Provider
If the proposed school intends to contract with an educational service provider (ESP), describe how the founding team became acquainted with the ESP and how the founding team determined that this particular ESP is best suited to serve the proposed group of students. In addition, indicate how the school will assess the performance of the ESP and determine whether a continued partnership is in the best interest of students. How will the school react if the ESP is unable to deliver the promised performance?

### B. ESP's Current Network, Mission, and Strategic Vision
Provides background information on the ESP and its desired goals.

1. Describe the ESP's genesis and mission in serving students.

2. Describe the ESP's current portfolio including:
   - Geographical areas served
   - Number of schools– provide a chart detailing the name, location, opening year (whether planned or realized), closure year (if applicable), and number of students served for each school in the portfolio. Also provide the names and contact information for all authorizers overseeing portfolio schools.
   - Student performance – provide evidence of each school's impact on student achievement as <u>Attachment #7</u>. State standardized test results, as well as other well-recognized test results (i.e.: ACT, SAT, NWEA, etc.) may be presented.
   - Provide evidence of the ESP's financial health and long-term viability. Include a copy of the ESP's most recent audited financial statements as <u>Attachment #8</u> and a disclosure of any current or past litigation involving the ESP or operated charter schools as <u>Attachment #9</u>.

3. Describe the ESP's strategic vision and plan for growth over the next five years, both in Minnesota and elsewhere. Include a brief analysis of what the ESP views as the primary challenges it will face in successfully achieving its mission, vision, and growth plans, as well as how these challenges will be addressed.
4. Provide an organizational chart for the ESP.

C. **Proposed Relationship Between ESP and Charter School**
    Provide a description of the scope of services the ESP intends to provide for the school as well as evidence of the ESP's capacity to successfully execute all functions (i.e.: If the ESP will provide back-office support, how will employees interface with the school and be trained on Minnesota-specific reporting structures?). Include a copy of the proposed contract detailing services to be rendered and compensation structure as Attachment #10.

V. **PRE-OPERATIONAL ACTION PLAN**
    Provides a detailed action plan outlining the steps the founding group will undertake to ensure a successful start-up. Use the St. Thomas Ready to Open Checklist as a key resource to present a well-organized chart that includes:

    1. All projected key steps in the pre-operational period,
    2. The started projected completion date of each task organized by month,
    3. The person(s) responsible for each task.

VII. **ATTACHMENTS**
    All applicants should attach the following items to the application:

    1. Founder Contact List (use attached template)
    2. Founding Group Resumes
    3. Founder and Board Member Conflict of Interest Forms (use attached template)
    4. Criminal Background Check Release Forms (use attached form)
    5. Evidence of Community Outreach
    6. Evidence of Student and Family Demand
    7. Evidence of Community Support
    8. 501(c)(3) Letter of Determination, Articles of Incorporation, and Bylaws

    Existing Operators only should also attach the following items to the application:

    9. ESP Complete Portfolio Academic Record
    10. ESP Financial Statements
    11. Disclosure of Current/Past Litigation Involving the ESP or Operated Charters
    12. Proposed Contract Between ESP and Charter

# ATTACHMENT A:
# LETTER OF INTENT

**UNIVERSITY OF St.Thomas**

All for the Common Good™

## NEW SCHOOL APPLICATION: LETTER OF INTENT

| Proposed School Information | |
|---|---|
| **Charter School Name:** | |
| Type of Application: | ☐ New School　　☐ Conversion of a traditional or private school |
| School District of Operation: | Proposed Opening Date: |

| Lead Applicant Contact Information | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Lead Applicant Name:** | | |
| Organization Name: | | |
| Applicant Mailing Address: | | |
| Primary Phone #: | Email: | |
| Applicant is a (check all that apply): | | |
| ☐ Parent　☐ Teacher　☐ School Administrator　☐ Community Member　☐ Other: _____ | | |

| Secondary Applicant Contact Information (if applicable) | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Secondary Applicant Name:** | | |
| Organization Name: | | |
| Applicant Mailing Address: | | |
| Primary Phone #: | Email: | |
| Applicant is a (check all that apply): | | |
| ☐ Parent　☐ Teacher　☐ School Administrator　☐ Community Member　☐ Other: _____ | | |

| Proposed Affiliations (if applicable) | |
|---|---|
| **Organization Name:** | |
| Type of Organization: | |

Charter Management Organization (CMO) or Education Management Organization (EMO)  Third Party Service Provider
☐ Other: _____

| Contact Name: | | Title: | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mailing Address: | | | |
| Primary Phone #: | | Email: | |

## Proposed Enrollment

Utilize the chart below to summarize enrollment by grade level over the first five years of operation. Please add additional years as needed to show when the proposed school will reach full enrollment.

| | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Proposed School Years | | | | | |
| PreK | | | | | |
| Kindergarten | | | | | |
| 1 | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | |
| 7 | | | | | |
| 8 | | | | | |
| 9 | | | | | |
| 10 | | | | | |
| 11 | | | | | |
| 12 | | | | | |
| *Total* | | | | | |

## Program Design

Provide the proposed school's vision and mission statement in the space below. **(Maximum 250 words)**

Provide the proposed school's key design elements in the space below.  **(Maximum 500 words)**

Provide a brief overview of the proposed school's academic program in the space below. **(Maximum 500 words)**

Provide an overview of how the school aligns with the mission of the University and the charter uthorizing Program's mission, core values and tenets. **(Maximum 500 words)**

School Governance and Management

Provide a brief overview of the school's management structure, including overall governance as well as the proposed leadership structure within the school. **(Maximum 500 words)**

Provide a list of all proposed Board Members below, along with a brief biographical statement for each proposed member. If a proposed member is to hold an officer position within the Board, please include that information. **(Maximum 500 words)**

Describe how the applicant team and proposed Board came together and the relationship of its members to each other (e.g. family relationships and/or existing or past business relations). **(Maximum 500 words)**

If you are working with a CMO, EMO or partner organization, please provide a description of the nature of that partnership below. Include a description of the type and frequency of the services that the partner would provide to the school, and any financial relationship between the proposed school and the partner organization, EMO, or CMO. **(Maximum 500 words)**
*Include a letter of confirmation from the CMO, EMO, or partner organization as an attachment to this Letter of Intent.*

## School Location and Facility Plans

Provide a brief overview of the proposed community in which the school will be located and why this location was selected. **(Maximum 500 words)**

Provide a brief overview of the proposed school's facility needs and plans below. **(Maximum 250 words)**

## Lead Applicant Signature

| Signature: | |
|---|---|

*By signing this Letter of Intent, the Lead Applicant certifies that the information contained in this proposal to establish a charter school pursuant to the Minnesota Statute Chapter 124E Charter Schools with University of St. Thomas is true and accurate to the best of their knowledge.*

# ATTACHMENT B:
# TEMPLATES

# COVER SHEET

UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION FOR AUTHORIZATION

**Proposed name of new charter public school:** _____

**School contact information:**
(School mailing address, phone number & email) _____

**Primary contact name:** _____

**Primary contact information** (if different from above)
(School mailing address, phone number & email) _____

**Grade Levels Served
When Fully Enrolled**:

_____

**Number of Students When Fully Enrolled in:**

Year 1:_____ Year 2:_____ Year 3:_____ Year 4:_____

**Proposed Opening Date:** _____

**Proposed Location:** _____

**Classification** (circle one):

New Operator     Existing Operator

**For virtual schools, geographical area to be served:**

_____

**For existing operators, name of ESP:** _____

**Is this charter public school a conversion of an existing district public school (see Minn. Stat. § 124E.06, subd. 6 (2025))?**

If "yes", attach a separate sheet with an explanation.                                    Yes  No

> *A conversion request is considered only with evidence of both:*
>  - *A petition from at least 60% of a school's full-time teachers seeking conversion; and*
>  - *Approved public school district board minutes recognizing the petition.*

**Is this charter public school a conversion of an existing education program in any form (public, private, or otherwise)?**                                    Yes  No

If "yes", attach a separate sheet with an explanation.

**Is this charter public school planning to offer any online coursework?**              Yes  No

                                                                                         Yes  No

**Has the new charter public school been approved by the State of Minnesota as a nonprofit corporation?**

If no, provide a specific date by which the new charter public school plans to be approved as a Minnesota nonprofit corporation.  If yes, provide articles of incorporation as attachment 6.          Date:

                                                                                         Yes  No

**Will an application for the same charter school be submitted to another authorizer in the near future?  If so, identify the authorizers and planned submission dates:**

**Has an application for the same charter school been submitted to another authorizer in the past?  If so, identify the authorizers and submission dates:**

Yes    No

**Does the school intend to contract with an Educational Service Provider (ESP)? If yes, identify the provider:**

Yes    No

# FOUNDERS CONTACT LIST TEMPLATE

UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION FOR AUTHORIZATION

Provide information for ALL individuals directly involved in the development of this new charter public school (founders, Board members, developers, grant writers, consultants, etc.).  Please type all information in the fields below.

| Name, Job Title (if applicable), and Category (e.g.: Jane Doe, Accountant, Prospective Parent) | Phone Number | E-Mail Address | Developer Role and Skill Set (e.g. Board member, consultant; finance, accounting, curriculum) | Minnesota Teacher License File Folder Number (if applicable) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
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**Important Notes**:

- Minn. Stat. § 124E.07, Subd. 3a (2025) stipulates that: *A charter School Board of Directors must be composed of at least five member*s. *The Board Members must not be related parties.*
- Minn. Stat. § 124E.06, Subd. 1a (2025) stipulates that: *An authorizer, after receiving an application from a charter school developer, may charter either a licensed teacher under section 122A.18, subdivision 1, or a group of individuals that includes one or more licensed teachers under section 122A.18, subdivision 1, to operate a school subject to the commissioner's approval of the authorizer's affidavit under subdivision 4.*
- Check accuracy of all contact information provided.
- Do not include on this list persons merely consulted in the development of the application. Include only **primary** founders and developers.

# FOUNDER AND BOARD MEMBER CONFLICT OF INTEREST FORM

UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION FOR AUTHORIZATION

*All founders and proposed Board members of the charter school are required to individually complete this form. Please provide a succinct answer to each question below.*

| Background | |
|---|---|
| Your Full Name | |
| Name of Affiliated Charter School | |
| Intended Role (check all that apply) | _____ Founder _____ Board Member _____ Employee <br> _____ Other (please explain): |

| Brief educational and employment history (no narrative response is required if resume is attached) |
|---|
| |
| Describe previous experiences that is relevant to serving on a charter school's Board and/or founding team (including any Board experience or experience overseeing start-up or entrepreneurial ventures). If you have not had previous experience of this nature, please explain why you have the capability to be an effective Board and/or founding team member. |
| |
| Do you understand the obligation of the Board of Directors to comply with Minnesota Law, including Open Meeting Law, Charter Law and other relevant statutes? |
| _____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure |

| Disclosures | |
|---|---|
| **Do you or your spouse know member/s of the founding team and/or prospective Board member/s?** | |
| _____ No, I/We do not know any such persons. | |

_____Yes, I/We do know such persons.

If you indicated yes to the above question, please describe the precise nature of your relationship.

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|  |

**Do you and/or your spouse know anyone who is doing, or plans to do, business with the proposed charter school (whether as an individual, director, officer, employee or agent of a vendor or other entity).**

_____ No, I/We do not know any such persons.

_____ Yes, I/We do know such persons.

If you indicated yes to the above question, please indicate and describe the precise nature your relationship and the nature of the business that such person or entity is transacting or will be transacting with the proposed charter school.

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|  |

**Do you, your spouse, and/or other immediate family members anticipate conducting, or are conducting, business with the proposed charter school and/or the University of St. Thomas?**

_____No, I/We are not and do not anticipate conducting any such business

_____Yes, I/We are and/or do anticipate conducting business.

If you indicated yes to the above question, please indicate and describe the precise nature of the business being or that will be conducted.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**If the proposed charter school intends to contract with an Education Service Provider or management organization, indicate whether you or your spouse knows any employees, officers, owners, directors or agents of that provider.**

_____No, I/We do not know any such persons.

_____Yes, I/We do know such persons.

_____Not Applicable because the proposed charter school does not intend to contract with an Education Service Provider or management organization

If you indicated yes to the above question, please describe such relationship.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

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**If the proposed charter school intends to contract with an Education Service Provider or management organization, indicate whether you, your spouse or other immediate family have a direct or indirect ownership, employment, contractual or management interest in the provider.**

_____No, I/We do not have any such interest.

_____Yes, I/We do have an interest/s.

_____Not Applicable because the proposed charter school does not intend to contract with an Education Service Provider or management organization

If you indicated yes to the above question, please provide a detailed description of any interest indicated.

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| |

**If the proposed charter school intends to contract with an Education Service Provider or management organization, indicate whether you, your spouse or other immediate family anticipate conducting, or are conducting, business with the provider.**

_____No, I/We are not and do not anticipate conducting any such business

_____Yes, I/We are and/or do anticipate conducting business.

_____ Not Applicable because the proposed charter school does not intend to contract with an Education Service Provider or management organization

If you indicated yes to the above question, please describe precise nature of the business that is being or will be conducted.

| |
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| |

**Are you, your spouse and/or immediate family members a director, office, employee, partner, member of and/or otherwise associated with any organization that is partnering with the proposed charter school?**

_____No, I/We are not associated with any organizations partnering with the proposed charter school.

_____Yes, I/We are associated with any organizations partnering with the proposed charter school.

If you indicated yes to the above question, please describe precise nature of the association.  To the extent you have provided this information in response to prior items, you may so indicate.

| |
|---|
| |

| **Indicate any potential ethical or legal conflicts of interest that would, or are likely to, exist should you serve of the proposed charter school's Board of Directors and/or founding team.** |
| --- |
| |

| **Certification** |
| --- |
| **I, _____ , certify to the best of my knowledge and ability that the information I am providing to the University of St. Thomas as a prospective Board Member and/or founding team member for the proposed charter school is true and correct in every respect** |
| Signature |
| Date |

# BACKGROUND CHECK AUTHORIZATION FORM

UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION FOR AUTHORIZATION

To be completed individually by all founders and proposed Board Members of the charter school.

| Background Check Authorization Form | |
|---|---|
| First Name: | |
| Middle Name (Optional): | |
| Last Name: | |
| Email address: | |
| Primary Phone number: | |
| Date of Birth: (dd/mm/yyyy) | |
| Address: | |
| City: | |
| State: | |
| Zip Code: | |

I hereby authorize the University of St. Thomas and its designated agents and representatives to conduct a comprehensive review of my background causing a consumer report and/or an investigative consumer report to be generated for employment and/or volunteer purposes. I understand that the scope of the consumer report/ investigative consumer report may include, but is not limited to the following areas: verification of social security number; credit reports, current and previous residences; employment history, education background, character references; drug testing, civil and criminal history records from any criminal justice agency in any or all federal, state, county jurisdictions; driving records, birth records, and any other public records.

I further authorize any individual, company, firm, corporation, or public agency to divulge any and all information, verbal or written, pertaining to me, to the University of St. Thomas or its agents. I further authorize the complete release of any records or data pertaining to me which the individual, company, firm, corporation, or public agency may have, to include information or data received from other sources the University of St. Thomas and its designated agents and representatives shall maintain all information received from this authorization in a confidential manner to protect the applicant's personal information, including, but not limited to, addresses, social security numbers, and dates of birth.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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**Notice to California, Minnesota and Oklahoma Residents:**
Please check the box below if you wish to receive a copy of a consumer report that is requested.
☐ I wish to receive a copy of any Background Check Report on me that is requested.

## Review Process

The University of St. Thomas (St. Thomas) utilizes a rigorous review process to examine applications for new schools and make determinations regarding whether a proposal should be approved or declined. St. Thomas reserves the right to deny authorization of a charter school at any point in the process without providing a reason for denial.

Each application cycle consists of the following elements:

- **Receipt of Letter of Intent:** St. Thomas receives letters of intent and conducts pre-application meetings to confirm potential mission alignment. If a Letter of Intent fails to demonstrate potential alignment with the St. Thomas mission and authorizing philosophy, after conferring with the St. Thomas Charter Accountability Board (CAB) and Dean, staff may notify the founding team that the school would not qualify for St. Thomas authorization. Staff begin to plan for the application cycle ahead by putting together highly qualified teams to review applications.

- **Application Receipt and Review for Completeness:** St. Thomas receives new school applications and staff conduct a review for completion and compliance with application guidelines. Applications which clearly do not meet requirements (ie: are missing sections, do not adhere to application guidelines, etc.) are not reviewed. If an application is rejected during the completeness review, the founding team will be promptly notified.

- **Application Evaluation:** An evaluation team consisting of St. Thomas Authorizing Program staff, independent external evaluators, and at times other St. Thomas community members deemed appropriate based on their unique skill sets [ie: faculty members with particular areas of expertise] conducts a comprehensive review of the application documents utilizing the adopted scoring rubric to provide feedback. In the case of schools applying as experienced operators, a due diligence review to assess the past performance of affiliated schools will be conducted. Reference checks with other authorizers, state education agencies, etc. may be conducted if determined appropriate by St. Thomas. Individual evaluation team members will each make a recommendation as to whether the application merits further consideration and possible approval.

- **Preliminary Recommendation and Founding Team Interview:** After the application evaluation is complete, St. Thomas staff will examine application feedback and recommendations and, based on the results, invite promising founding teams for an in-person interview to assess capacity to implement the proposed educational model with fidelity and move through the start-up phase successfully. Authorizing Program staff, the Dean of the College of Education and representatives of the CAB will participate in the interview process on behalf of St. Thomas.

- **Staff Recommendation and Decision Process:** Following the application evaluation and interview process, Authorizing Program staff, in consultation with St. Thomas interview participants, will formulate an independent judgment regarding whether to recommend the application for approval or denial. This recommendation, along with supporting evidence including consolidated reviewer comments and interview notes, is presented to the members of the CAB and Dean of the School of Education. If the CAB recommends approval and the Dean supports the recommendation, the University President will be notified and will have final authority to allow the new school to be approved and the contracting process/affidavit process to move forward.

**Feedback to Founding Teams**

Whether an application is approved or denied, all founding team will receive a copy of consolidated reviewer comments and interview notes (if applicable). Founding teams are also welcome to request a meeting with St. Thomas Authorizing Program staff to examine the feedback, ask questions, and discuss opportunities for future improvement of the application.

## Evaluation Rubric

As highlighted in the Review Process section above, St. Thomas utilizes an evaluation team comprised of Authorizing Program staff, independent external evaluators, and at times other St. Thomas community members deemed appropriate based on their unique skill sets [ie: faculty members with particular areas of expertise] to conduct a comprehensive review of the application documents. Each member of the evaluation team uses the adopted scoring rubric that follows to provide feedback and make a recommendation as to whether the application merits further consideration and possible approval.

It is important to note that each reviewer is asked to provide a numeric rating for all of the application elements. The ratings are tallied across reviewers and an average score presented. Because reviewers have a range of relevant expertise and because we do not require reviewers to come to consensus on a group rating for each area, ratings for the same element may vary from reviewer to reviewer. St. Thomas does not have a threshold score that applicants are required to attain in order to move forward in the process. Rather, individual and average scores along with comments and questions are used as resources to inform the decision-making process.

St. Thomas reserves the right to deny an application for any reason it deems appropriate.

| Application to Start a New Charter School |
| :---: |
| **Evaluation Rubric** |

**Instructions for Application Reviewers**

Please review the following criteria to rate applicant responses to the Request for Proposals. Within each section, specific criteria define the expectations for a strong response that "Meets the Standard."

| Rating | Characteristics |
| --- | --- |
| **3 = Meets the Standard** | The response inspires confidence in the applicant's ability to carry out the plan and reflects a thorough understanding of key issues. The information supplied is accurate, appears realistic, and responds to *all application elements*. Strengths are numerous and the response is of sufficient quality and detail to suggest that implementation of plans would lead to the development of a high-quality charter school. Weaknesses, if present, are minor and unlikely to adversely impact the school's ability to develop and operate successfully. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **2 = Approaches the Standard** | The response addresses application elements in most areas and strengths outweigh weaknesses. However, detail in one or more areas is lacking, reflects a slightly flawed understanding of key issues, or calls into question whether the plan presented would result in a high-quality charter school. |
| **1 = Partially Meets the Standard** | The response meets the criteria in some respects but has substantial gaps in several areas and lacks detail. The response may contain incorrect information, appear overly optimistic/simplistic, or fail to respond to all application elements. While some strengths may be present, they are outweighed by weaknesses which appear likely to adversely impact the ability to develop and operate a high-quality charter school. |
| **0 = Does Not Meet the Standard** | The response is incomplete, inaccurate, underdeveloped, unrealistic, demonstrates lack of preparation, or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the viability of the plan or the applicant's ability to carry it out. Weaknesses far outweigh any strengths and make it appear unlikely that the plan presented would result in a high-quality charter school. |

In each section, mark the number 0-3 indicating your impression of the applicant's response. Provide brief comments to support your ratings in the right-hand column, citing page numbers from the application as appropriate to support your comments. In the "Additional Comments" box at the end of each section, please list one or more suggested interview questions.

In addition to completing this scoring sheet, please complete a brief, half-page memorandum stating your overall impression of the Application, summarizing its strengths and weaknesses.

**Name of Applicant:**

**Name of School(s):**

**Name of Reviewer:**

**Date:**

| APPLICATION NARRATIVE | RATING & COMMENTS (Please cite application page numbers as appropriate.) Application Page Number |
|---|---|
| ***Cover Sheet*** | *N/A* |
| **I.  Executive Summary** | |
| • Genesis (how and why did the founding team come together and the process used to prepare for the submission), <br>• Mission and vision <br>• Need(s) the school intends to address that are currently not being met in the community in which the school will be located. <br>• Statutory purpose(s), <br>• Grade levels to be served and the total number of students per grade (at full capacity), <br>• Target population (who does the school anticipate serving), <br>• Intended location and rationale for selection which includes a market need and demand analysis and availability of properly zoned and classified facilities, <br>• Key program design elements, <br>• Educational philosophy and instructional approach, <br>• Evidence of community support including how parents/guardians and community member engagement in the application development process. | *0      1      2      3* |
| ***Overall Section Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:*** | |
| **II.  School Foundation** | |
| **A.  Need & Demand** <br>*Presents a compelling reason for establishing the new charter school.* | |
| • Well-defined understanding of the community and target population including educational needs and challenges. <br>• Identifies and provides a performance analysis of other educational options located in the area. <br>• Presents a sound rationale for the decision to serve this community and population, including the grade levels chosen, and how the proposed school would provide a needed alternative for the community. <br>• Presents evidence of community support and community involvement in the development of this school is present: including involvement of youth, parents, and key community partners. | *0      1      2      3* |

| | |
|---|---|
| <ul><li>Addresses one or more Minnesota Statewide Goals under the Federal Charter Schools program (CSP) Grant Project.</li><li>Describes community outreach efforts made to date and planned by the founding team.</li><li>Provides evidence of the need and demand for a school in the location identified.</li></ul> | |

*Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:*

| **B. Mission & Vision**<br>*Provides clear, focused, compelling mission vision and mission statements that reflect the school's goals and purpose. Alignment with the University of St. Thomas and Authorizing Program's mission is present.* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| <ul><li>Vision: Provides a vision statement that outlines what the school wants to be (something to be pursued).</li><li>Mission: Provides a mission statement that outlines what the school is now (something to be accomplished).</li><li>Aligns with the University of St. Thomas mission, "*To educate students to be morally responsible leaders who think critically, act wisely and work skillfully to advance the common good.*"</li><li>Aligns with the St. Thomas Charter School Authorizing Program mission, "*To advance the common good by using quality authorizing practices and cross-sector university expertise to oversee and promote the health of charter schools that demonstrably assist students in reaching their full academic and human potential.*"</li></ul> | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |

*Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:*

| **C. Purpose & Key Design Elements**<br>*Presents how the new charter school is innovative and how the school supports two or more statutory purposes for charter schools (including the primary purpose).* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| <ul><li>Provides a strong overview of the design elements that are critical to the school's success and how these elements meet the needs of the target population identified.</li><li>Highlights the new and unique characteristics this school would provide to students that distinguish it from other education options available to students.</li><li>Provides an analysis of any research, evidence of effectiveness or example of existing program, which support the selection of these elements.</li></ul> | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |

| | |
|---|---|
| • Identifies one or more of the statutory purposes for charter schools that the school intends to meet and provides a comprehensive description of how the school's vision and mission are connected to the identified purpose(s). | |

***Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:***

| **D. Alignment with St. Thomas Charter School Philosophy** *Presents alignment with one or more of the tenets of the St. Thomas Charter School Authorizing Philosophy* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Provides a compelling description of how the school aligns with the Authorizing Program's mission, core values and at least one of the following tenets:<br><br>a. *Education that promotes Moral Responsibility.* St. Thomas believes that it is a necessary role for its charter schools to demonstrate the ability to use an ethical framework in decision making. Educators must process, articulate and act from a reasoned, ethically grounded educational philosophy.<br><br>b. *Education that promotes Critical thinking.* St. Thomas believes that educators must employ critical thinking skills about the theory and practice of schooling, reflecting broad understandings in humanities, social sciences and current events. Students need to develop basic skills in literacy and numeracy to develop the skills to think critically.<br><br>c. *Education that promotes Wise Action.* St. Thomas expects its charter schools to create and maintain a culture for learning marked by practices that promote broad participation on the part of all constituents in the school community. It is through this process of teamwork and collegiality that wise action emerges in determining the best policies and practices to promote student learning.<br><br>d. *Education that promotes Skillful Work.* St. Thomas believes that charter schools are a viable option for families who wish to provide the best possible educational opportunities for their children. Therefore, charter schools authorized by St. Thomas should establish a track record of skillful work on the part of the students, including student achievement marked by excellence in relation to other schools in their neighborhood, city, state and nation. St. Thomas will not enter an authorizing relationship with schools who lack a commitment to providing a higher quality learning program, one in which the skills of students are established at a high level and are assessed and analyzed regularly.<br><br>e. *Education that Advances the Common Good.* St. Thomas is committed to working with children and families in | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |

| | |
|---|---|
| need, ones who have traditionally been left behind while other segments of society have thrived. St. Thomas's mission is to advance the common good through the authorization of charter schools who demonstrate a commitment to fairness and equity for all students, no matter their background. | |

*Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:*

| | | | | | |
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| **E. School Founders & Proposed Board Members** *Describes the school founders/proposed Board Members and how they are well positioned to develop and plan a new high-quality charter school.* | | | | | |
| <ul><li>Describes how founding team came together to propose school.</li><li>Includes for each school founder/ Board Member:<ul><li>Member's experience and/or involvement in PK-12 education;</li><li>Member's experience with the design and operation of a charter school;</li><li>Member's role in the planning process to date and their expected role and responsibilities during the school's pre-operational planning period;</li><li>Member's experience and/or involvement with the community the school proposes to serve;</li><li>Member's intention to become a member of the interim Board of directors;</li><li>Member's intention to apply for employment in the new charter school; and</li><li>Member's relevant work experience and expertise they bring to the founding team.</li></ul></li><li>Discloses which members of the founding team have played a role in crafting the application narrative. If a consultant or employee of an Education Service Provider was used, disclose his/her name and experience.</li></ul> | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* | |

*Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:*

*Overall Section Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:*

# III.  Academic Success

**A. Learning Program & Student Achievement**

| *Presents a high-quality educational program and goals for student achievement.* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Educational Philosophy, Curricula, Tools, Methods and Instructional Techniques | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |

Educational Philosophy, Curricula, Tools, Methods and Instructional Techniques

- Provides a strong description of the school's Educational Philosophy, Curricula, Tools, Methods and Instructional Techniques that addresses:
  - Guiding educational philosophy of this school and basic learning environment.
  - Curriculum selection, (including names of textbook sequences selected or under consideration), tools (including specialized technology if applicable), methods and instructional techniques that support the educational philosophy.
  - Research evidence demonstrating how these curricula, tools, techniques and methods support student achievement (if applicable, identify schools involved).
  - Process the school will use to ensure the curricula will align with Minnesota's K-12 Academic Standards and, if PK students will be served, the state's Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPS).
  - Contribution this charter school will make in assisting educationally and economically disadvantaged and other students to succeed academically.
  - Identification of class sizes and structures including the maximum number of students in any one classroom (by grade if varied) and number/roles of adults outside of special education paraprofessionals (i.e.: team teaching structure, single teacher, teacher with classroom aide, etc.).
  - Description of how the systems of the school, as well as those of classroom teachers, will support and meet the diverse learning needs of individual students.
  - Promotion of graduation for all students, including those at risk and those with special needs.

  - *Schools serving preschool/prekindergarten students only:*
    - Addresses how the program will assess each child's cognitive skills with a comprehensive child assessment instrument when the child enters, and before the child leaves the program, to inform program planning and promote kindergarten readiness.
    - Describes how the school will ensure participating children have completed health and developmental screening within 90 days of program enrollment under *MN Statutes section 121A.16 to 121A.19.* Describes the handling of the transition to kindergarten.
  - *Blended learning schools and virtual schools only:*
    - Provides specific information on the number of hours students will spend receiving this type of instruction,

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| how progress will be tracked, what curricular/software programs will be used, and by whom students will be overseen throughout the day. | | | | |

*Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Special Populations<br>3. Demonstrates a clear understanding of federal and state laws that require charter schools to serve and meet the needs of all students, including those with special needs.<br>4. Provides a strong summary of the school's systems, processes and program to serve students with special needs that includes the following:<br>   o A description of the proposed Child Find process that will be used and the safeguards that will be put in place to avoid misidentification.<br>   o Process for maintaining appropriate records.<br>   o A detailed description of how this school will provide services to students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment that specifies (1) The specific instructional programs or practices to be used; (2) How the school will ensure access to the general education curriculum; (3) Plans for monitoring and evaluating progress toward IEP goals; and (4) Staffing plans to meet student needs. | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |

*Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Students with Limited English Proficiency<br>5. Demonstrates a clear understanding of federal and state laws that require charter schools to support the learning of multilingual students in attainment of English language proficiency in English and state academic content standards.<br>6. Provides a strong summary of how this school will provide services to English Learners (ELs) that includes:<br>   o How ELs will be identified;<br>   o Enrollment, initial placement and continuing placement process;<br>   o Exit processes and procedures;<br>   o The specific instructional programs or practices to be used including usage of WIDA English Language Development Standards;<br>   o How student progress and success will be monitored; and<br>   o Staffing plans to meet student needs.<br>   o The school's process and procedures to render effective language assistance to students and adults who communicate in a language other than English | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:* | | | | |
| Gifted and At-Risk Students<br>• Explains how the school will identify and serve students who are intellectually gifted or are performing below grade level/are at-risk but do not qualify for special education or other services. | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |
| *Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:* | | | | |
| Supplemental Programming<br>• If applicable, provides a description of summer school, extra-curricular offerings, and/or other supplemental programs that are integral to the mission of the school that includes: describe:<br>  o What offerings will entail<br>  o How often they will occur/how long they will run<br>  o How they will be funded | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |
| *Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:* | | | | |
| **B. School Culture and Discipline**<br>*Presents a clear vision for school culture and coherent plan for creating and maintaining this culture.* | | | | |
| • Provides a clear description of the desired school culture.<br>• Provides a coherent plan for implementing the described culture.<br>• Provides a description of the philosophy that will surround the school's discipline policy, as well as the policy itself. If the policy has not yet been developed, the application includes information on how and when this work will be completed. | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |
| *Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:* | | | | |
| **C. Assessment and Accountability**<br>*Presents a vision for assessment and accountability that reflects the school's commitment to assessment and accountability that promotes a high academic standard.* | | | | |
| • Describes the school's philosophical approach to assessment. | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |

| | |
|---|---|
| • Describes the systems to be used in managing and disseminating student performance data in terms of processes, software (if applicable) and personnel.<br>• Describes any training and support that school leadership and teachers will receive in analyzing, interpreting, and utilizing student data.<br>• Describes how the school will use assessment data to drive decisions about the learning program and strategic direction of the school.<br>• Identifies the school's mission-specific quantifiable academic goals for students and the school.<br>• Discusses how the school will know if it is successfully educating students. | |

**Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:**

**Overall Section Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:**

| IV.  *Governance and Operations* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A. Governance**<br>*Describes a plan to ensure effective, accountable and representative governance over the school's operations.* | | | | |
| Governance Model<br>• Describes the roles and responsibilities of the Board and how each member will help advance this understanding.<br>• Describes the Board's governance model/Board composition and how it will help advance the mission of the school including.  If the Board plans to utilize any committees, advisory bodies, or councils, provide information on their composition (i.e.: parents, staff, community, teacher, etc.) and their reporting structure in relation to the school leadership team and governing Board.<br>• Describe the school Board's finance committee including the composition, frequency of meeting, and its role in reviewing and making recommendations to the Board on financial health and best practices.<br>• Describes the roles and responsibilities of the Board and how each member will help advance this understanding.<br>• Describes how the role of the Board will be distinguished from the role of the School Leader.<br>• Includes information on the Board's schedule both during the founding period and after the start of the school.  How often has the Board met?  How often does it plan to meet during and after the founding period? | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:* | |
| Board Recruitment and Training<br>• Describes specific expertise/characteristics sought in yet-to-be-recruited Board Members and explains the added value of those characteristics.<br>• Describes the plan for initial training of the Board during the school's pre-operational planning period and for ongoing Board training and development once the school opens. | *0    1    2    3* |
| *Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:* | |
| Parent, Family, and Community Involvement<br>• Describes the Board's strategy for engaging and involving parents of potential students (including stepparents, guardians, etc.) and other members of the community in the planning, program design, and implementation of this charter school. | *0    1    2    3* |
| *Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:* | |
| Plan for Fulfilling Board Obligations<br>• Describes how the interim Board will develop policy during the pre-operational planning period to ensure the Board governs the charter public school in compliance with federal, state and local requirements.<br>• Describes the specific plan and timeline for the development of:<br>   o Personnel policies (including the creation of job descriptions, an employee performance management program, etc.);<br>   o Procurement policies and procedures for contracting with vendors and consultants that are fair and open and that avoid apparent and actual conflicts of interest;<br>   o Conflict of interest policies;<br>   o Travel approval and reimbursement policies; and<br>   o Process and timeline for applying for 501(c)3 status, if not already completed. | *0    1    2    3* |
| *Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:* | |

| B. Staffing and Management<br>*Describes a plan to ensure effective and transparent management of the school's operations.* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Structure and Organization<br>• Provides an organizational chart for the proposed charter school, distinguishing between governance (Board), management (School Leader) and other proposed school employees. Includes key responsibilities for each position.<br>• Includes a staffing plan for the first contract period (pre-operational through the first five years of school operation) that describes how the school will build its leadership, operations, and teaching staff.<br>• Explains how organizational structure is consistent with the mission and vision of the proposed charter school. | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |
| School Leader<br>1) Describes the fair and open process the interim Board will use for recruiting and hiring the School Leader, including:<br>• The timeline for developing a job description for the School Leader and then recruiting and hiring the School Leader;<br>• How the Board will recruit potential candidates who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age or disability; and<br>• Whether the Board plans to hire a temporary start-up coordinator and, if so, how this person will be identified.<br><br>Other School Employees<br>2) Describes the school's strategy and process and timeline for recruiting and hiring other school employees, including teachers, who are qualified to effectively serve the unique needs of the projected student population.<br><br>3) Outlines the school's procedures for conducting background checks of employees and others.<br><br>Performance and Evaluation<br>• Describes how, and on what timeline, the school will evaluate the performance of teachers and school leadership. Include references as to who will conduct the various evaluations and how unsatisfactory performance will be handled. | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |
| Training and Professional Development<br>4) Describes how the school will provide employees with initial and ongoing orientation and professional development about the mission, vision and outcomes of the school.<br><br>5) Provides information regarding the general professional development teachers and others will receive prior to the start | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| of the first school year as well as the training topics the school plans to cover during its initial year of operation.<br><br>Compensation Strategy<br>    6) Describe the school's compensation strategy, particularly for teachers and leadership.  This section should clearly align with the provided budget and narrative. | | | | |

***Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:***

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| **C. School Calendar and Schedule**<br>*Describes a calendar and schedule that reflects the school's goals, purposes and proposed learning program.* | | | | |
| • Describes the calendar the school plans to use:<br>• Identify the unique characteristics of the school's proposed calendar.<br>• Describes how this proposed calendar lends itself to the school's mission, vision, and needs of the students being served.<br>• Provides total number of student instructional days and minutes as well as professional development days.<br>• Provides a copy of the school's proposed calendar for the first year of operation.<br>• Provides a school-wide 'master' schedule that is aligned to the program described at anticipated enrollment levels and clearly shows:<br>    o Arrival and dismissal times<br>    o Duration of various periods<br>    o Time devoted to each subject area<br>    o Number of classrooms at anticipated enrollment level<br>    o Teacher preparatory periods<br>    o Student lunch/recess periods<br>• Provides a description or outline of a "typical day" at the new school. | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |

***Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:***

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| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **D.  Facility Plan**<br>*Describes a plan to secure a suitable facility that meets the unique needs of the school and complies with health and safety and building code requirements.* | | | | |
| Facility Needs Planning Process | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |

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|---|---|
| <ul><li>Describes the school's plan, including the timeline and process, for determining space needs appropriate to the program and enrollment.</li><li>Describes results of a preliminary facility needs assessment.</li></ul> **Facility Selection Process** <ul><li>Describes the school's plan, including milestones, timeline, and process, for locating and selecting an appropriate facility.</li><li>Provides a description of any potential facility or facilities that have been identified.</li></ul> | |

| *Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:* |
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| **E. Transportation Plan** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Describes a plan to provide transportation that meets the needs of the school and complies with Minnesota law.* | | | | |
| Transportation Options <ul><li>If the school will provide its own transportation, describes the school's plan, including the timeline, process and milestones to be met in locating and evaluating potential transportation providers.</li><li>If the resident school district will provide transportation for the school, describes any potential impacts on the school's learning program and school calendar.</li></ul> Transportation Policies <ul><li>Describes the school's policy for providing transportation to special populations</li><li>Describes the school's policy for providing transportation to students that live outside the resident district.</li></ul> | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |

| *Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:* |
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| *Overall Section Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:* |
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| # V.    Budget and Financial Sustainability | |
|---|---|
| **A.  Marketing, Outreach, Enrollment & Admissions** *Describes a marketing and outreach plan, based on the compelling need established, to ensure open access to all and full enrollment.* | . |

| | |
|---|---|
| <ul><li>Identifies the number of students expected to attend the school each year by grade level</li><li>Describes the rationale for the growth plan depicted above (i.e.: Why start with the grade levels identified?  The number of students identified?)</li><li>Describes the school's marketing strategy for recruiting and retaining the school's target population.</li><li>Discusses how this school will intentionally and specifically conduct outreach to educationally and economically disadvantaged and hard-to-reach populations.</li><li>Describes how the school will engage families and community members from the time that the school is approved through opening.</li><li>Describes how the school will conduct an open admissions process including the use of a lottery to provide equal access to all students who apply.</li></ul> | *0      1      2      3* |

***Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:***

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|---|---|
| **B.   Budget and Financial Planning**<br>*Describes a strong plan to ensure the financial viability of the school and effective management of budget and finances.* | |
| <ul><li>Includes a **five-year operational budget projection** that meet the following standards:</li></ul><br>Standard One: Qualities of sound financial management are present.<br>1.1 Assumptions guiding the budget development process are defensible.<ul><li>Enrollment estimates are based upon sound interest surveys and marketing data.</li><li>A valid data source for assumptions about student characteristic data is described.</li><li>Current and historical data assist in shaping revenue and expenditure increases and inflation assumptions</li></ul><br>1.2 Financial management strategies reflect abilities to adapt to changing fiscal conditions.<ul><li>Budget balancing and cost-containment strategies address potential enrollment changes.</li><li>Replacement and improvement costs for technology, capital and supplies are adequately addressed.</li></ul> | *0      1      2      3* |
| Standard Two: Qualities of a healthy budget are present.<br>2.1 There is a positive general fund balance in each of the three years.<ul><li>The budget for each year has an increasing general fund balance.</li></ul> | *0      1      2      3* |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|     o A fund balance exists even if inaccuracies are corrected.<br>2.2 The budget reflects only general fund items.<br>2.3 Enrollment and staffing projections are consistently used throughout all sections of the application. | | | | |
| Standard Three: The budget supports a quality school plan.<br>3.1 The budget contains a justification for each service option listed in the application.<br>    o The narrative elements of the application are completed for each option.<br>    o Each option requiring budget data is consistently described throughout the application.<br>3.2 Some expenditures support the uniqueness of the school mission.<br>    o Special curricular expenditures are clearly supported in the narrative.<br>    o The budget contains unique and realistic staffing patterns. | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |
| ***Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:*** | | | | |
| • A **budget narrative** is presented that includes:<br>    o Strong assumptions, rationales and substantive documentation for the numbers presented in the five-year budget.<br>    o A letter of verification for grant or philanthropic funds placed in the budget that have been secured.<br>    o A plan for how the school will cover anticipated expenses for grant/philanthropic funds placed in the budget, but not secured, should they not materialize.<br>    o Addresses the timeline the school intends to follow in applying for Charter School Program Grant start-up funds and what the school's contingency plan would be if funds are not received. | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |
| ***Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:*** | | | | |
| • Presents a strong plan and processes for **budget development and financial planning** describes the process the Board and school leadership will use to develop and approve the annual budget, including:<br>    o Who will be involved,<br>    o How needs will be identified and weighed,<br>    o Timeline for creating and approving budgets, and<br>    o Procedures and intervals for monitoring and modifying budgets. | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |

| **C. Financial Oversight**<br>*Presents a strong system, processes and procedures for financial oversight.* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Describes the policies and procedures the school will use to ensure that taxpayer dollars are appropriately used and accounted for. This includes procedures for managing accounting, payroll, purchasing, and the annual audit.<br>• Describes the process the Board and school leadership will use to monitor the financial condition of the school.<br>• If the school intends to hire an external financial manager or other support, include this information and how potential contractors and the auditor will be selected. | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |

**Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:**

**Overall Section Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:**

# VI.  *Additional Information for Existing Operators Only*

| **A. Selection and Oversight of Educational Service Provider** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Describes how the founding team became acquainted with the ESP and how the founding team determined that this particular ESP is best suited to serve the proposed group of students.<br>• Indicates how the school will assess the performance of the ESP and determine whether a continued partnership is in the best interest of students. | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |

| **B. ESP's Current Network, Mission, and Strategic Vision**<br>*Provides background information on the ESP and its desired goals.* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Describes the ESP's genesis, and mission in serving students.<br><br>• Describes the ESP's current portfolio including:<br>  o Geographical areas served<br>  o Number of schools– provide a chart detailing the name, location, opening year (whether planned or realized), closure year (if applicable), and number of students served for each school in the portfolio. Also provide the names and contact information for all authorizers overseeing portfolio schools.<br>  o Provides evidence of each school's impact on student achievement as attachment #7. State standardized test | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |

| | |
|---|---|
| results, as well as other well-recognized test results (ie: ACT, SAT, NWEA, etc.) may be presented.<br><br>    ○  Provides evidence of the ESP's financial health and long-term viability including required attachments #8 and #9.<br><br>- Describes the ESP's strategic vision and plan for growth over the next five years in Minnesota and elsewhere. Analyzes primary challenges.<br><br>- Organizational chart for ESP provided. | |

*Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:*

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| **C. Proposed Relationship Between ESP and Charter School** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| - Provides a description of the scope of services the ESP intends to provide for the school as well as evidence of the ESP's capacity to successfully execute all functions.<br>- Includes a copy of the proposed contract as attachment #10. | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |

*Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:*

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*Overall Section Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:*

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# VII. Pre-Operational Action Plan

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Provides a detailed action plan outlining the steps the founding group will undertake to ensure a successful start-up. Use the St. Thomas Ready to Open Checklist as a key resource to present a well-organized chart that includes:<br><br>- All projected key steps in the pre-operational period,<br>- The started projected completion date of each task organized by month, and<br>- The person(s) responsible for each task. | *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* |

*Overall Section Comments/Suggested Interview Questions:*

<br><br>

**CONCLUSION**

*Overall Rating* **and Summary Comments**

Please complete your evaluation by writing a brief statement representing your overall impression of the Application and summarizing its strengths and weaknesses. The thoughts identified below should represent a "thirty second snapshot" of your evaluation. Finalize your summary <u>by including a statement regarding whether you believe the application meets standards overall and the applicant group should move forward to the capacity interview</u>.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**What is a New Operator vs. an Existing Operator?**
St. Thomas defines a 'New Operator' as an applicant whose founding team members have not previously operated a charter school, and who do not intend to contract with an experienced Education Service Provider (ESP) to oversee the implementation of the school's academic program and overall operation.

'Experienced Operators' are defined as applicants whose founding team members have previously operated a charter school or who intend to contract with an experienced Education Service Provider (ESP) to oversee the implementation of the school's academic program and overall operation. ESP is defined as a "for profit education management organization, nonprofit charter management organization, school design provider, or any other partner entity with which a charter school intends to contract for educational design, implementation, or comprehensive management."

If you believe that your founding team has elements of both a new and experienced applicant, please contact St. Thomas Authorizing Program staff regarding which application version should be completed.[2]

**Will I have a chance to make additions or changes to my application after the submission deadline?**
No. Once the submission deadline has passed, no changes may be made. Please double-check your application to ensure that all materials are included, clearly marked, and in the proper order prior to submitting.

**Do I have to follow the order of the application questions exactly?**
Yes. The St. Thomas application is arranged to facilitate our understanding of the school model being proposed, as well as allow for efficient review by internal and external experts. Applications which do not follow the required format, contain incomplete information, or are missing attachments may be disqualified and removed from the review process. St. Thomas reserves the right to reject any applications that are incomplete or substantially diverge from application specifications prior to internal/external expert review. Additionally, all applicants are encouraged to review the Evaluation Rubric prior to submitting their application to ensure that responses address all criteria.

**Can I apply to more than one authorizer? If I do, will it hurt my chances of receiving authorization from St. Thomas?**
The relationship between a charter school and authorizer is critically important and functions best when St. Thomas and mutual respect are present. For this reason, St. Thomas encourages founding teams to learn as much as possible about the mission, vision, philosophy, and operating policies and procedures of any entity to which it intends to apply for authorization. If the founding team believes it is aligned with more than one authorizing entity, St. Thomas does not prevent or discourage the team from submitting multiple applications, nor does it penalize founding teams who apply to more than one authorizer. We do require that applicants disclose the names of authorizers to which they have applied or intend to apply.

**Where can I learn more about St. Thomas and its authorizing philosophy?**

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[2] Definitions in this section are adapted from those crafted by the Indiana Charter School Board.

The best place to learn about St. Thomas's Authorizing Program is its webpage. We particularly encourage prospective applicants to read the 'about the St. Thomas Authorizing Program' section, our Authorizing Program Policy Manual, and profiles of the schools currently in our network. Time allowing, we are also happy to meet with applicant groups in person to discuss the application process and our authorizing philosophy.

Link to our webpage: https://education.stthomas.edu/about/impact/charter-school-authorizing/

**If I submit a letter of intent, do I have to submit a full application?**
The letter of intent is intended to communicate your interest in and intention to submit an application to St. Thomas; however, there is no obligation to submit a full application should your circumstances change. As the letters of intent are primarily used to determine the number of applications we will receive, and the number of reviewers we will need, we greatly appreciate notification via email or phone if you no longer intend to submit an application during the current round.

**How can I ask questions and provide feedback to St. Thomas?**
Please direct any questions regarding application submission, process, timeline, or content to tmoffatt@stthomas.edu. In addition, we are always looking to improve our processes and invite comments and suggestions from applicants. If there are additional questions you believe would have assisted your organization in showcasing its proposal, or language you believe could have been clarified, please send your suggestions—as well as a citation for the part of the application to which your comment pertains—to tmoffatt@stthomas.edu.

# V. NEW SCHOOL READY-TO-OPEN PROCESSES

The University of St. Thomas (St. Thomas) is dedicated to collaborating with accepted charter school founding teams to ensure the realization of the high quality, successful schools envisioned during the application process. The pre-operational period is a critical time in which the school is laying the foundation for future performance. As such, St. Thomas is committed to working closely with school founders throughout the planning year to ensure that all Ready-to-Open (RTO) benchmarks are met and the school is prepared to open successfully. In the event that the school is unable to satisfy the RTO benchmarks, the opening of the school will be postponed by one year in accordance with *Minnesota Statute 124E.06 Subd.3(h)*:

> *The authorizer may prevent an approved charter school from opening for operation if, among other grounds, the charter school violates this chapter or does not meet the ready-to-open standards that are part of the authorizer's oversight and evaluation process or are stipulated in the charter school contract.*

The RTO timeline, process and benchmark are detailed below.

## Timeline

Please note that the timelines included are intended to provide an idea of the general process and may vary from one cycle to the next. Updated timelines are available by contacting the Director of Charter School Authorizing, or by checking the St. Thomas Charter Authorizing Program website.

| Date | Action |
|---|---|
| August | Notification of Charter Approval |
| Twice-Monthly | Ongoing monitoring of progress towards RTO checklist by St. Thomas staff through meetings (in-person and/or via phone) by St. Thomas staff. |
| 1 Week Prior to RTO Meeting | All information and supporting documentation sent to St. Thomas verifying attainment of benchmarks. |
| 6-8 Weeks Prior to First Day of Operations | **Ready-to-Open Meeting** |
| Within 2 Weeks of RTO Meeting | Final Determination of RTO issued |

## Ready-to-Open Benchmarks

The RTO benchmarks consist of eight areas of critical importance, which are aligned with the detailed checklist used during the pre-operational period. In order to open, the school must demonstrate its satisfaction of each area. The benchmarks are as follows, see the Ready-to-Open Benchmark Requirement Detail below for a full description of each item and required documentation:

1. **Enrollment** is sufficient to allow for financial viability and programmatic integrity.
   - Confirmed enrollment is at or above the minimum number acceptable per the school's contingency budget for lowest possible operating enrollment.

2. **Contract with St. Thomas and all attachments** have been finalized, including certificates of proper insurance as well as a completed accountability plan.
   - Completed contract is on file with St. Thomas

3. **Board governance** is competent and compliant with law.
   - St. Thomas observation of Board meetings and minutes indicates understanding of key laws (e.g. Open Meeting Law) and use of best practices.
   - Mandated training has been completed.
   - Necessary Board policies, procedures, and bylaws are in place and approved by the Board.

4. **Appropriate school site** has been acquired and the lease signed.
   - St. Thomas has received a copy of the lease, received the opportunity to review and comment as specified by contract, and has no significant concerns.
   - Facility is safe and suitable to receive students.

5. **Funding** is prepared to flow from the state to the school and MDE Opening Checklist items are complete.
   - At least 9 of the 11 items listed below must be completed before the school will be considered eligible to operate. Any items not completed are well underway, will be completed prior to opening, and will not prevent funding from flowing to the school.

     a. Lease aid
     b. SERVS
     c. EDRS
     d. UFARS
     e. PERA/TRA set up
     f. Direct deposit for funds set up
     g. Title 1 app in if applicable
     h. MARSS
     i. Food service plan
     j. CSP grant items
     k. 501(c)(3)
   - All additional items included on the current version of the MDE Opening Checklist are complete or on-track for timely completion.

6. **Learning program** elements are in place for meeting the mission of the school.

- The curriculum scope and sequence for the grades to be served in the school's first year are complete.
- All necessary materials (e.g. books, manipulatives, etc.) have been purchased and will be on-site prior to opening.
- Classroom environments are suitable for the mission-specific learning program.

7. **Transportation** plan is in place and viable.
   - The school has secured bussing either through the resident district or an alternative vendor.

8. **Key staff** and majority of teachers have been hired.
   - The School Leader and at least 75% of staff members have been hired
   - The school has an appropriately-licensed special education director in place prior to opening
   - A plan is in place to hire any remaining staff well before the start of the year

## Process

A charter school's ability to successfully fulfill the three primary components of its contractual agreement with St. Thomas – academic success, fiscal viability, and organizational aptitude – depends a great deal on what happens well before the doors of the school ever open. The most complicated tasks, critical timelines, and demanding commitments are parts of a charter school's pre-operational year(s). While a Start-Up Coordinator is often hired by the interim Board to handle many functions, the volunteer efforts of Board Members and parents are often necessary to absorb much of the work and provide direction to any pre-operational staff.

Due to the broad scope of activities and the modest number of players involved in seeing them through, St. Thomas has organized a charter school's start-up year into a calendar. This Ready-to-Open Checklist is designed to walk start-up groups through the processes of developing their learning program, reaching out to potential students, securing facilities, creating appropriate financial management and governance policies, and ensuring compliance with the law. The tool also provides a relatively simple vehicle for St. Thomas oversight of start-up activities. St. Thomas believes the Ready-to-Open Checklist will help focus Board efforts on the pre-operational tasks and will help in meeting deadlines.

Progress and completion of Ready-to-Open Checklist items will be reviewed regularly through the Pre-Operational Oversight process outlined below and culminate with a Ready-to-Open meeting and the final decision regarding readiness to open.

**Pre-Operational Oversight**

Progress and completion of Ready-to-Open Checklist items will be monitoring through the following:

- *Board Chair or Start-Up Coordinator Report*. The Board Chair or Start-Up Coordinator should maintain a master copy of the Start-Up Checklist in both paper and electronic versions.
- *Twice-Monthly Meetings with St. Thomas Staff*. Start-Up Coordinators are required to have twice monthly check-in meetings with St. Thomas staff to review progress towards benchmarks and ensure the school is on-track.

- ***Charter School Board Meetings***.  School Boards are expected to review Start-Up Checklist Items at all Board meeting in which St. Thomas representatives are in attendance and should be included in the Board Chair or Start-Up Coordinator report at every Board meeting whether the authorizer is present or not.

## Ready-to-Open Meeting

A new school's planning period culminates in a RTO meeting which ensures that all benchmarks have been met, and the school is prepared to open successfully.  In the event that the school is unable to satisfy the RTO benchmarks, the opening of the school will be postponed by one year in accordance with *MN Statute 124E.06, Subd 3(h):*

> *The authorizer may prevent an approved charter school from opening for operation if, among other grounds, the charter school violates this section or does not meet the ready-to-open standards that are part of the authorizer's oversight and evaluation process or are stipulated in the charter school contract.*

RTO meetings are required to be structured as follows:

- ***Attendees***.  The following persons must attend the RTO meeting:
    - Board chair and treasurer
    - Financial manager
    - School leader
    - Operations manager/Start-up Coordinator
    - St. Thomas representatives

    Additional Board members are welcome to attend; however, please be aware of Open Meeting Law requirements with respect to quorum.

- ***Location and Format***.  The RTO meeting will be held at the school site and will commence with a brief tour of the school facility followed by an opportunity for the school to demonstrate how each benchmark has been satisfied.  The final portion of the meeting will be reserved for discussion of the school's progress.  A RTO meeting will typically take 2-3 hours, but may require additional time if the school is facing numerous or complex issues.

## Final Decision

St. Thomas will issue a Final Determination of Readiness to Open within two weeks of the RTO meeting.  Schools unable to satisfy all criteria after this period will be allowed to open no sooner than the start of the following academic year, contingent on satisfaction of RTO benchmarks at that time.

St. Thomas reserves the right to terminate the charter with the founding Board at the time of the Final Determination if it is clear that significant deficiencies exist which lead St. Thomas to question the viability of the program.  Those deficiencies will be outlined in the Final Determination correspondence.

# Ready to Open Benchmark Requirement Detail

| Benchmark | Criteria | Documentation | Submission Timeline |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1) Enrollment** is sufficient to allow for financial viability and programmatic integrity. | Enrollment is at or above the minimum number acceptable per the school's contingency budget for lowest possible operating enrollment (See pre-September checklist). | Contingency Budget<br><br>Current enrollment figures (based on families who have completely filled out enrollment forms—those who have indicated interest but have not formally enrolled may not be counted). | File with St. Thomas at least one week prior to RTO meeting. (reference pre-September checklist)<br><br>File with St. Thomas at least one week prior to RTO meeting.<br>Bring copies of most updated figures to RTO meeting if changes have occurred. (reference April and May checklists) |
| **2) Contract** with St. Thomas, including all attachments, has been finalized. | Completed contract signed and on file with St. Thomas. | Completed contract<br>(Although preliminary contract will have been executed, items such as insurance certificates will need to be added prior to opening.  Check all attachments for accuracy and completion.) | June 30th or one week prior to RTO meeting, whichever comes first. (reference pre-September checklist) |
| **3) Board governance** is competent and compliant with law. | a. St. Thomas observation of Board meetings and review of minutes indicates understanding of key laws (ie: Open Meeting Law) and use of best practices such as review of member attendance rates, functioning committees, oversight of pre-operational functions, etc.<br><br>b. Mandated training has been completed for all members.<br><br>c. Necessary Board policies, procedures, and bylaws are in place and have been approved by the Board. | St. Thomas Notes<br>Minutes, board attendance rates, listing/descriptions of committees established and functioning<br><br>Complete Board contact information sheet attached as Appendix A below<br><br>Board policy handbook; current bylaws should be included in contract. If changes have been made since contract, include updated bylaws. | At least one week prior to RTO meeting. (reference September and October checklists)<br><br>At least one week prior to RTO meeting. (reference November checklist)<br>At least one week prior to RTO meeting. (reference October, January, February, and July checklists) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4) **Appropriate School Site** acquired/Lease signed | St. Thomas possesses a copy of the lease, received the opportunity to review and comment as specified by contract, and has no significant concerns. Facility is safe and ready to receive students. | Signed Lease<br><br>St. Thomas observation of site and discussion of improvements completed and underway. Certificate of Occupancy | At least one week prior to RTO meeting if changes were made to the lease St. Thomas reviewed and commented on. (reference checklist for November) |
| 5) **Funding** is prepared to flow from the state to the school and MDE Opening Checklist items are complete. | At least 9 of the 11 items listed below must be completed before the school will be considered eligible to operate. Any items not completed are well underway, will be completed prior to opening, and will not prevent funding from flowing to the school.<br>  i. Lease aid<br>  ii. SERVS<br>  iii. EDRS<br>  iv. UFARS<br>  v. PERA/TRA set up<br>  vi. Direct deposit for funds set up<br>  vii. Title 1 app in if applicable<br>  viii. MARSS<br>  ix. Food service plan<br>  x. CSP grant items<br>  xi. 501(c)(3)<br><br>All additional items included on the current version of the MDE Opening Checklist are complete or on-track for timely completion. | The items below may be documented through a variety of means, suggestions for verification of each item are found below. No additional verification is required for CSP items as authorizers are copied on all official MDE grant notices. i. Copy St. Thomas on the electronic submission of the Lease Aid Application (or forward MDE's verification of receipt). ii.,iv, viii. Completed MDE Site Change Request Form iii., v., vi. Electronic or other document verification ix. Completed contract with food service provider, confirmation of enrollment in reimbursement program<br><br>vii. Enrollment projections including number of projected FRL and ELL students. xi. Copy of 501(c)(3) award letter | All electronic verification must be sent to St. Thomas at least one week prior to the RTO meeting. (reference checklists for pre-September, January, May, and June)<br><br>Attend the meeting prepared to discuss the current status of each item. |
| 6) **Learning program** elements are in place for meeting the mission of the school. | The curriculum scope and sequence for the grades to be served in the school's first year are complete. All necessary materials (ie: books, manipulatives, etc.) have been purchased and will be on-site prior to opening. Classroom environments appear safe and suitable for the mission-specific learning program. | Curriculum scope and sequence document Purchasing plan and copy of CSP grant budget | At least one week prior to RTO meeting. (reference March checklist) |
| 7) **Transportation** plan is in place (and viable). | The school has secured bussing either through the resident district or an alternative vendor. | Signed contract with vendor or resident school district agreement verification. | At least one week prior to RTO meeting. (reference May checklist) |

| 8) **Key staff** and majority of teachers have been hired. | The School Leader and at least 75% of staff members have been hired. Plans are underway to hire any remaining staff well before the start of the year. The school has an appropriately-licensed special education director in place prior to opening. | Complete teacher licensure verification form attached as Appendix B<br>Include an all-staff listing with titles and positions remaining vacant<br>MDE memo approving Special Education Director | At least one week prior to RTO meeting. (reference June checklist) |

Appendix A
Board Contact Information

| Last Name | First Name | Date Seated | Term End Date | Employment Training | Governance Training | Financial Training | Position (ie: chair) | Email Phone | Address (optional) | Mtg Dates, Times | Date of next elections |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Date training was or will be completed (only if already scheduled) and provider name. | | | | | | | |
| Sample | Susie | May 14, 2014 | May 14, 2016 | Completed 7/7/2010 | Completed 7/7/2010 | Scheduled 8/4/2011 | Board Chair | susiesample@yahoo.com 612.218.8888 | 890 Jersey Ave Crystal, MN 55404 | First Tues., 6:30pm | May 2015 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
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Appendix B
Teacher Licensure Verification

| Teacher Name | File Folder # | Subject or Specialty | Courses Taught | Grade(s) Taught | License Details |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sally Sample | 426777 | Math | Algebra I, Geometry | 6-7 | El-Ed K-6 and Math 5-8 (expires 6/30/2015) |
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## Ready to Open Checklist

| | Task | Person(s) Responsible | Board Committee | Progress | Category | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pre-September** | **Learning Program** | | | | | |
| | • Identify instructional strategies the school will use to achieve academic goals | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| | • Finalize mission and vision statements for the school | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| | • Develop a marketing plan | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |
| | • Compose a brief history of the origin of the school and community need for the school | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |
| | • Description of school (grade levels served, expected enrollment demographics, etc.) | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |
| | • Contact MDE and consider attending new charter school boot-camp/MARSS/SERVS/UFARS and other relevant trainings in preparation for what will come next year. | | | *Incomplete* | OPERATIONS | |
| | **Financial Management/Oversight** | | | | | |
| | • Secure additional grants (e.g. Walton, CSP, etc.) | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| | • Revise and expand the budget in the application to include all secured grants. Develop at least two contingency budgets (one with lowest possible operating enrollment and one another enrollment scenario) | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| | • Establish relationship, open account with local banking institution, order checks | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| | **Governance and Operations** | | | | | |
| | • Ensure contract with St. Thomas is signed and submitted to MDE within 90 days of MDE application approval | | | *Incomplete* | LEGAL | |
| | • Identify legal status, tax-exempt status (file for 501c3 status) | | | *Incomplete* | LEGAL | |
| | • Determine governance structure | | | *Incomplete* | GOV | |

| | Task | Person(s) Responsible | Board Committee | Progress | Category | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | • Draft protocol for onboarding new board members and tracking terms | | | *Incomplete* | GOV | |
| | • Establish a Board meeting calendar (dates) | | | *Incomplete* | GOV | |
| | • Establish a Board meeting calendar (activities that must take place each month) | | | *Incomplete* | GOV | |
| | • Identify potential Board members with a financial background | | | *Incomplete* | GOV | |

| | Task | Person(s) Responsible | Board Committee | Progress | Category | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **September** | **Financial Management/Oversight** | | | | | |
| | • Write planning grant budget including a budget narrative per MDE requirements | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| | • Designate financial manager for school | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| | • Hire auditor | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| | • Identify check writers and signers | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| | • Schedule monthly finance committee meetings | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| | **Governance and Operations** | | | | | |
| | • Conduct needs assessment, including evaluating how the site will meet curricular and program needs to advance the mission of the school | | | *Incomplete* | FACILITY | |
| | • Identify options and assess accessibility of proposed school locations | | | *Incomplete* | FACILITY | |
| | • Recruit Board members with specific expertise (law, finance, real estate, etc.) | | | *Incomplete* | GOV | |
| | • The Board adopts, and each individual signs, a conflict-of-interest policy | | | *Incomplete* | GOV | |
| | • Ensure all current Board members have completed statutorily required trainings | | | *Incomplete* | GOV | |
| | • Obtain Board liability insurance (Directors and Officers) | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| | • Review Open Meeting Law | | | *Incomplete* | LEGAL | |
| | • Review and print copies of MN Statute 124E (https://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/statutes/?id=124E)for Board members and staff | | | *Incomplete* | LEGAL | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | • Review civil rights and equity issues (including MN Education Statutes, www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/stats/120.html) | | | *Incomplete* | LEGAL | |
| | • Identify STAR coordinator and sign up for MDE Listservs to keep up with and learn about information in key areas | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |
| | • Board creates a marketing committee | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |
| | • Consider hiring a marketing/enrollment coordinator OR identify person responsible for organizing marketing/enrollment activities | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |

| | Task | Person(s) Responsible | Board Committee | Progress | Category | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **October** | **Learning Program** | | | | | |
| | • Assign Board member to review special education requirements including special education assurances (MDE) | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| | **Financial Management/Oversight** | | | | | |
| | • Develop internal controls and fiscal policies | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| | • Acquire forms (purchase orders, checks, etc.) | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| | **Governance and Operations** | | | | | |
| | • Board membership includes individual(s) with legal/policy expertise | | | *Incomplete* | LEGAL | |
| | • The Board has retained legal counsel, where applicable | | | *Incomplete* | LEGAL | |
| | • Define committees and write descriptions | | | *Incomplete* | LEGAL | |
| | • Review codes/ordinances/regulations | | | *Incomplete* | LEGAL | |
| | • Develop job descriptions for director and other start up staff | | | *Incomplete* | HR | |
| | • Develop by-laws (MSBA membership, MACS, other operational charter schools) | | | *Incomplete* | GOV | |
| | • Develop job descriptions for Board of Directors and Officers | | | *Incomplete* | GOV | |
| | • Develop and begin performing Board self-evaluations | | | *Incomplete* | GOV | |
| | • Evaluate/inspect potential sites, enlist facility design help | | | *Incomplete* | FACILITY | |
| | • Obtain resources for financing a facility | | | *Incomplete* | FACILITY | |
| | • Waiting list/lottery plan established | | | *Incomplete* | POLICY | |
| | • Review and update marketing plan | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |
| | • Continue to develop communications materials (brochures, newsletters) | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |
| | • Continue to identify community events at which to market the school | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |
| | • Continue to identify strategies to recruit a diverse student body (community groups, etc.) | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |

| | Task | Person(s) Responsible | Board Committee | Progress | Category | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | • Enrollment target: 50 interest forms completed | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |
| **November** | **Financial Management/Oversight** | | | | | |
| | • The Board has discussed securing unemployment insurance | | | *Incomplete* | HR | |
| | • Determine first year staffing needs | | | *Incomplete* | HR | |
| | • Establish segregation of duties (start-up coordinator, director, Board, staff) | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| | **Governance and Operations** | | | | | |
| | • Hire start-up coordinator (or School Leader), if applicable | | | *Incomplete* | HR | |
| | • Create a systematic plan for relationship development with community organizations that have mission alignment with the school | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| | • Start-up coordinator/director has clearly defined responsibilities and authority (what can be done without specific Board approval) | | | *Incomplete* | GOV | |
| | • Develop a Board binder | | | *Incomplete* | GOV | |
| | • Board training plan: governance, employment, financial. Each member must have begun training within 6 months of being seated. | | | *Incomplete* | GOV | |
| | • Necessary facility inspections initiated and required improvements/timeline established | | | *Incomplete* | GOV | |
| | • The School Board adopts an evaluation process for the director | | | *Incomplete* | GOV | |
| | • Consider how facility supports curriculum and expansion potential | | | *Incomplete* | FACILITY | |
| | • Site is acquired; lease is signed. | | | *Incomplete* | FACILITY | |
| | • Legal counsel reviews lease and any addendums, etc. | | | *Incomplete* | LEGAL | |
| | • Database of interested/enrolled students is created and utilized to keep track of students/families associated with school during enrollment period | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |

| | Task | Person(s) Responsible | Board Committee | Progress | Category | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | • Enrollment target: 75 interest forms completed | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |

| | Task | Person(s) Responsible | Board Committee | Progress | Category | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **December** | **Learning Program** | | | | | |
| | • Develop a plan for ensuring that service learning opportunities are embedded in the curriculum | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| | • Develop curriculum purchasing plan | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| | **Financial Management/Oversight** | | | | | |
| | • Consult MDE re: lease aid | | | *Incomplete* | FACILITY | |
| | **Governance and Operations** | | | | | |
| | • Acquire a district number | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |
| | • All required elements of MDE Next Steps document are complete | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |
| | • Criminal background checks conducted for each Board member | | | *Incomplete* | HR | |
| | • Develop an intake process for students and families | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |
| | • Identify strategies to deal with external controversy/internal conflict | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |
| | • Enrollment target: 100 interest forms | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |

| | Task | Person(s) Responsible | Board Committee | Progress | Category | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **January** | **Learning Program** | | | | | |
| | • Applicant pool for School Director position and staff is established by recruiting potential candidates through ads placed in multiple media outlets and referrals from charter/education sources. | | | *Incomplete* | HR | |
| | • Develop draft accountability plan with St. Thomas | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| | **Financial Management/Oversight** | | | | | |
| | • In preparation for authorizing direct deposits from the state, ensure that your school has | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |

| | Task | Person(s) Responsible | Board Committee | Progress | Category | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | received a Federal Employee Identification Number (from IRS) and Minnesota Tax Identification Number (from MN Department of Revenue | | | | | |
| | • Register for DUSN/CCR number for use in the Federal System for Award Management (SAM) | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |
| | • Create SERVS account through MDE | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |
| | • Planning grant budget narrative submitted and approved by MDE. | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |
| | • Form 990 for non-profit organizations completed and submitted to IRS | | | *Incomplete* | LEGAL | |
| | **Governance and Operations** | | | | | |
| | • Admissions policy and all forms follow MN Statutes 124E.11 and Chapter 363A | | | *Incomplete* | LEGAL | |
| | • Contract with St. Thomas signed within 90 days of affidavit approval by MDE | | | *Incomplete* | LEGAL | |
| | • Set date for Ready to Open Meeting with St. Thomas (May-July) | | | *Incomplete* | LEGAL | |
| | • During enrollment process, develop and utilize a transcript request form as final verification of enrollment | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |
| | • Enrollment target: 125 interest forms completed; 25 enrollment packets completed | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |

| | Task | Person(s) Responsible | Board Committee | Progress | Category | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **February** | **Learning Program** | | | | | |
| | • Screen and select potential candidates (multiple candidates identified for Director position and interviewed per hiring policies) | | | *Incomplete* | HR | |
| | • Evaluate technology needs and develop a purchase plan | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| | **Financial Management/Oversight** | | | | | |
| | • Establish insurance policies | | | *Incomplete* | LEGAL | |
| | **Governance and Operations** | | | | | |
| | • Address building security issues | | | *Incomplete* | FACILITY | |

| | Task | Person(s) Responsible | Board Committee | Progress | Category | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | • Develop hiring policies and procedures for Director and staff (including plan for hiring teachers and staff that reflect the racial/ethnic/cultural character of the school's identified location) | | | *Incomplete* | HR | |
| | • Establish terms of employment | | | *Incomplete* | HR | |
| | • Produce benefit packages, vacation policies, pension policies, worker compensation, etc. | | | *Incomplete* | HR | |
| | • Develop staff policies | | | *Incomplete* | HR | |
| | • Enrollment target: 150 interest forms completed; 50 enrollment packets completed | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |

| | Task | Person(s) Responsible | Board Committee | Progress | Category | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **March** | **Learning Program** | | | | | |
| | • Develop scope and sequence of learning outcomes at each grade level | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| | • Create a matrix of curriculum resource options to make informed decisions | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| | **Financial Management/Oversight** | | | | | |
| | • Secure line of credit or establish relationship with lending organization | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| | • Develop and monitor cash flow plan | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| | • Submit lease aid application to MDE | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |
| | • Enrollment target: XXXX interest forms completed; XXXX enrollment packets completed [insert targets specific to school] | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |

| | Task | Person(s) Responsible | Board Committee | Progress | Category | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Apr i** | **Learning Program** | | | | | |
| | • Identify a District Assessment Coordinator (DAC); file with MDE | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |
| | • Develop specific plan for parent involvement opportunities | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| | **Financial Management/Oversight** | | | | | |

| Task | | Person(s) Responsible | Board Committee | Progress | Category | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Establish staff salary range | | | | *Incomplete* | HR | |
| • Establish staff benefits | | | | *Incomplete* | HR | |
| • Establish direct deposit (EFT Authorization) with the Minnesota Department of Finance | | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| • Revised first operating year budget presented to Board | | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| **Governance and Operations** | | | | | | |
| • Establish personnel policies/handbook | | | | *Incomplete* | HR | |
| • If applicable, hire school director and begin transition process for start-up coordinator | | | | *Incomplete* | HR | |
| • Director hires or continues hiring licensed staff in conjunction with established hiring policies and school learning program | | | | *Incomplete* | HR | |
| • Create a plan for implementing food and nutrition program – reference MDE checklist | | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |
| • At least two community partnerships initiated | | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |
| • Enrollment target: XXXX interest forms completed; XXXX enrollment packets completed [insert targets specific to school] | | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |
| • Consult with Authorizer and schedule RTO meeting | | | | *Incomplete* | RTO | |

| | Task | Person(s) Responsible | Board Committee | Progress | Category | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **May** | **Learning Program** | | | | | |
| | • Develop a school Calendar | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| | • Go over finalized accountability plan with St. Thomas to ensure understanding of measures and reporting requirements | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| | • Identify and hire Special Education Director or contract for services | | | *Incomplete* | HR | |
| | • File Special Education Director Information with MDE | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |
| | • Register for food and nutrition training at MDE | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |

| | Task | Person(s) Responsible | Board Committee | Progress | Category | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | • Ensure that school has appropriate policies and procedures in place for identifying/serving ELL students | | | *Incomplete* | POLICY | |
| | • Develop a student/parent handbook | | | *Incomplete* | POLICY | |
| | • Complete plan for staff onboarding and development | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| | **Financial Management/Oversight** | | | | | |
| | • Identify and purchase financial management software (UFARS compatible) | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| | • PERA is set up with State | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| | • TRA is set up with State | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| | • Enrollment projections aligned with appropriate student weighting formulas (including free/reduced and special education revenues) | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| | **Governance and Operations** | | | | | |
| | • Director attends MDE director training, if applicable | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |
| | • Director attends Title I training at MDE (EMAP training) | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |
| | • District in which charter school is located notified of school's intention to utilize district bussing services (if part of approved plan) | | | *Incomplete* | ANCILLARY | |
| | • Purchase all technology | | | *Incomplete* | ANCILLARY | |
| | • Develop a health and safety policy handbook | | | *Incomplete* | HR | |

| | Task | Person(s) Responsible | Board Committee | Progress | Category | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **June** | **Learning Program** | | | | | |
| | • Purchase all curriculum materials | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| | • Identify and plan for any curricular staff development needs | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| | • Finalize accountability plan with St. Thomas | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| | • Develop a school disciplinary policy that is compliant with the MN Pupil Fair Dismissal Act | | | *Incomplete* | POLICY | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (see also statute 121A.45 at www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/stats/121A/45.html) | | | | | |
| | • Identify and hire Special Education Teacher(s) | | | *Incomplete* | HR | |
| | • Identify contractors for supplemental services (speech, psychologist, etc) | | | *Incomplete* | HR | |
| | • Identify staff member responsible for Special Education record keeping procedures | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| | • Create a system for identifying special needs students | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| **Financial Management/Oversight** | | | | | | |
| | • Lease-aid application submitted to MDE | | | *Incomplete* | FACILITY | |
| | • Contact local health inspection agency to obtain food service facility license | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |
| | • Attend food and nutritional training | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |
| | • Request bids for a catering service or cooperative agreement with a neighboring school district to provide school meals if the charter school will not be preparing meals on-site | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |
| | • UFARS: acquire approved software, attend MDE training, assign a system coordinator | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |
| | • Complete district and school site verification | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |
| | • Submit Enrollment Projection Reports | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |
| | • Planning Grant continuation request filed with MDE | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |
| | • Approve annual budget and communicate approval to MDE (submit Board minutes indicating budget approved) | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| | • Title I application submitted to MDE | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| | • Identify staff member to learn EDRS/SERVS to ensure flow of special education funding, set up system with MDE, attend all required training | | | *Incomplete* | FINANCE | |
| | • Enrollment target: XXXX interest forms completed; XXXX enrollment packets completed; working toward waitlist of XXXX students; [insert targets specific to school] | | | *Incomplete* | MARKETING | |

| | Governance and Operations | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | • Plan for transition of permanent Board | | | *Incomplete* | GOV | |
| | • Install server and other technology equipment | | | *Incomplete* | ANCILLARY | |
| | • Transportation plan developed and approved (necessary contracts signed) | | | *Incomplete* | ANCILLARY | |
| | • Food service plan developed and approved (necessary contracts signed) | | | *Incomplete* | ANCILLARY | |
| | • Submit Charter School Transportation Survey Form | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |
| | • MARSS: acquire approved software, attend MDE training, assign a system coordinator | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |
| | • All teachers are properly licensed. If necessary all variances/waiver have been secured. | | | *Incomplete* | HR | |
| | • At least 75% of staff is hired | | | *Incomplete* | HR | |

| | Task | Person(s) Responsible | Board Committee | Progress | Category | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **July** | **Learning Program** | | | | | |
| | • Identify and purchase appropriate standardized assessments | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| | • Staff assignments adjusted based on enrollment projections | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| | • Staff professional development planned and implemented | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| | • Design teacher evaluation system aligned with schoolwide goals | | | *Incomplete* | ACADEMIC | |
| | • Design discipline policies, code of ethics, and student responsibility code | | | *Incomplete* | POLICY | |
| | • Complete the school nutrition application procedure through MDE | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |
| | • Obtain food manager certification for at least one staff person | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |
| | • Submit 'How to Participate' documents relating to school nutrition in order to be eligible for USDA funds. | | | *Incomplete* | MDE | |

| | | | | | Incomplete | MDE | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | • Learn about how your school's eligibility for Title funding will be calculated | | | | Incomplete | MDE | |
| | • Begin completing documentation for the 9-cent menu certification process | | | | Incomplete | MDE | |
| **Financial Management/Oversight** | | | | | | | |
| | • Budget evaluated against enrollment projections, revised if necessary (presumes greater than anticipated enrollment) | | | | Incomplete | FINANCE | |
| **Governance and Operations** | | | | | | | |
| | • Make necessary repairs/installations per lease | | | | Incomplete | FACILITY | |
| | • Arrange for custodian/maintenance services | | | | Incomplete | ANCILLARY | |
| | • Ongoing staff development program designed, approved, and communicated to teachers/staff | | | | Incomplete | HR | |
| | • Conduct criminal background/reference checks of all staff | | | | Incomplete | HR | |
| | • Establish enrollment, attendance, transportation, food services, dress code, and harassment policies | | | | Incomplete | POLICY | |
| | • Enrollment target: XXXX interest forms completed; XXXX enrollment packets completed; working toward wait list of XXXX students [insert school specific targets] | | | | Incomplete | MARKETING | |

# VI. Charter Renewal Process and Application

University of St. Thomas (St. Thomas) views contract renewal as an ongoing process that is engaged in by the Board of Directors, school leadership, and the authorizer throughout the duration of the school's contract with its authorizer, and not just an end of contract exercise. The process culminates in renewal year activities including an end of term site visit, sharing of a draft evaluation, application for contract renewal and St. Thomas finalizing its evaluation of the school's progress over the contract term. This process meets the requirements of *MN Statutes 124E.05 subd.4(7)* which states that an authorizer must have a "process for renewing or terminating the school's charter based on evidence showing the academic, organizational, and financial competency of the school, including its success in increasing student achievement and meeting the goals of the charter school agreement...."

During the renewal year, St. Thomas will conduct an End of Contract Visit in the fall, as well as an informal site visit in the spring. End of Contract Term Site Visits are similar to Formal Site Visits but are conducted by a team of reviewers four to six months prior to the end of the school's contract term. The visit takes place prior to the school's submission of the Renewal Application and, along with the observations and documentation accumulated throughout the length of the contract, provides St. Thomas with the information needed to finalize its draft renewal evaluation of the school's performance against the Accountability System agreed upon in its contract.

The school receives the draft renewal evaluation and has an opportunity, through the Renewal Application, to:

- Provide the school's analysis of its academic, financial, and organizational performance from the current contract;
- Review, comment, and provide additional information on any area of the renewal evaluation draft;
- Address the concerns raised by St. Thomas staff in the renewal evaluation draft; and
- Describe future programmatic changes and school-specific goals.

The Renewal Application also provides the school with an opportunity to reaffirm the key programmatic and organizational elements of the school's charter which, if renewed, will assist in the preparation of the school's new contract.

After receiving and reviewing the school's Renewal Application, St. Thomas will then make changes to its draft evaluation as necessary and resubmit a final evaluation and renewal determination to the school's Board. Using the results of the final evaluation St. Thomas determines whether to renew its contract with the charter school and if so, for what length of time. Contracts can be renewed for up to five years and St. Thomas references the Length of Contract Renewal Guidelines document found below as a guide in determining an appropriate contract length. However, it is appropriate to note that the guidelines document does not obligate the Board to a particular decision or length of contract and should not be construed as a requirement or guarantee. St. Thomas acts in accordance with *MN Statutes 124E*, and considers the performance

of all students as the most important factor in determining contract renewal, with the additional statutory purposes as additional factors.

In the event that a school's contract is terminated or not renewed, St. Thomas would adhere to all relevant requirements and timelines provided by *Minnesota Statutes 124E.10, Subd. 4.*

Per statute, St. Thomas may act to terminate or not renew a charter on the following grounds:
> *(1) failure to demonstrate satisfactory academic achievement for all students, including the requirements for pupil performance contained in the contract;*
> *(2) failure to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management;*
> *(3) violations of law; or*
> *(4) other good cause shown.*

## Timeline

Please note that the timelines below represent the latest an action may take place. Schools may submit application documents in advance of the deadlines listed, and St. Thomas may provide invitations/notifications early when possible and practical.

| Date | Action |
|---|---|
| September - First Friday in December | End of Term Site Visit by St. Thomas Charter Renewal Team (See Program Manual section on Accountability and Oversight for additional information). |
| Third Friday of December | Renewal evaluation drafted and shared with school |
| First Friday of February | Renewal application due to St. Thomas |
| February Board meeting | Renewal evaluation finalized and recommended for approval/denial by St. Thomas Charter Accountability Board; approval/denial forwarded to St. Thomas President by School of Education Dean. |
| First Friday of March | Final evaluation and contract determination provided to the school (60 business days prior to the end of the contract) |
| March - April | Contract negotiations (renewing schools only) |
| April Board meeting | School Board signs contract |
| No later than June 30th | St. Thomas President signs contract; contract submitted to MDE within 10 business days. |

## Instructions

**Formatting of Renewal Application**

The renewal application narrative should be a maximum of 15 single-spaced pages using 12 pt. font and one-inch margins. Schools may determine their use of the 15 pages and may allot space to the various report components based on need and preference. Attachments to the narrative are not included in the page limit. Both the narrative and its attachments must be submitted as a single Microsoft Word or PDF documents.

**Submission of Renewal Application**

Please submit *one electronic copy* (Microsoft Word or PDF) of the narrative and all relevant attachments to tmoffatt@stthomas.edu and the school's liaison. See timeline above for due date.

## Application Elements

Please organize your report according to the ordering below. The renewal application includes five sections:

- Charter Application Information,
- Academic Success,
- Financial Viability,
- Organizational Capacity, and
- Response to Evaluation

Please clearly mark each section and subsection.

1. **Charter Application Information:** Re-affirm the key elements of the school's charter. If critical elements of the original charter (i.e.: mission, target population, educational philosophy, etc.) have evolved over time and/or the school has plans to modify such elements during the coming contract period, address why the change is needed and how the modified elements will result in better outcomes for students. St. Thomas reserves the right to approve or deny modifications to the original charter. [Recommended page limit: 2-5]

   a. **Confirm or update your school's Program Description information.** The responses in this section will be attached to your charter contract and will represent the key elements of your charter.

      - **Mission**
        State and affirm the mission your school intends to fulfill in the coming contract period, if the mission has changed in any way, articulate what has changed and why. Note that before a new mission can take effect authorizer approval is required.

      - **Vision**
        State and affirm the vision your school intends to fulfill in the coming contract period, if the vision has changed in any way, articulate what has changed and why.

- **Declaration of Primary and Secondary Purposes**
  Indicates which of the statutory purposes articulated in 124E your charter will implement. Must include the primary purpose and at least one secondary purpose.

- **Scope of Program**
  - *Grades to be served*
    Must align with currently approved grades, if not fully implemented, provide the timeline for growth.
  - *Number of students served*
    Only be specific if this is a critical programmatic element—for example—if part of your model is to provide a small-school environment, note the maximum number of students you would enroll. If size is not critical, provide reasonable parameters, ie: 'The school currently serves 400 students and abides by the School Board's annual determination regarding maximum class sizes.
  - *Target population*
    Only be as specific as your model requires. For example, a target population could be 'students in the Phalen Lake neighborhood.' Bear in mind that charter schools must abide by open enrollment requirements regardless of their target population.
  - *Location*
    Only be as specific as your model requires. Think 'metro,' or if located in a rural area, the name of a specific town/region.
  - *School Calendar*
    Provide a brief description such as: traditional calendar, year-round calendar, traditional calendar with extended school day, etc.
  - *Early Learning*
    Provide a brief description of the program and whether the school provides an early childhood health developmental screening program.
  - *Transportation*
    Provide a brief explanation of how the school intends to provide transportation for students.

- **Description of Educational Model and Philosophy**
  - *Statement of Philosophy*
    What you believe about how students should be educated—and how they will be/are educated in your school.
  - *Description of Model*
    For example: Classical, IB, Immersion, Montessori, Virtual/Hybrid, Project Based, etc. Provide details around what the model offers.]
  - *Description of Online Programming*
    If the school offers online programming approved by MDE, note the date of approval and the scope of the program. Note that if the school offers online programming which does not require MDE approval it should be described as a part of the *description of model* section above.
  - *Description of Critical Programmatic Elements*
    These are items that make your school what it is, without which the school would differ from the idea originally proposed in the application. For example: foreign language offerings for all students, use of mentoring partnerships, internship program, etc.

- **Services for Special Populations**
  - *Special Education*
    As dictated by the charter law, provide information on "how the Board of Directors or the operators of the charter school will provide special instruction and services for children with a disability under sections 125A.03 to 125A.24, and 125A.65, and a description of the financial parameters within which the charter school will operate to provide the special instruction and services to children with a disability."
  - *English Language Learners*
    Provide information on how the school serves these students in accordance with law.
  - *Gifted Students*
    Provide information on how the school meets the needs of these students.

- **Governance and Management Plan**
  Provide a brief description of the school's organizational structure, management plan, and governance structure. Governance structure would include the board composition identified in your bylaws, as well as any standing committees that are identified in your bylaws or are critical to your model.

- **Educational Service Provider**
  Does the school intend to use an Educational Service Provider/Charter Management Organization? If no, delete this section entirely or mark it 'not applicable.' If yes, provide a description of the ESP and the services to be provided.

2. **Academic Success:** Illustrate the school's academic successes and challenges over the course of the current contract term, as well as future plans for the academic program. [Recommended page limit: 1]

   a. **Administrative Team Analysis**
      - **Examination of Past Performance**
        Briefly present the administrative team's evaluation of the school's academic performance over the current contract period, including both significant successes and challenges.

      - **Future Plans**
        Briefly present the administrative team's plans for continuously improving the academic program and maintaining current areas of excellence.

3. **Financial Viability:** Illustrate the school's responsible oversight and management of financial resources over the course of the current contract term, as well as future plans to maintain financial viability. [Recommended page limit: 1]

   a. **Administrative Team Analysis**
      - **Examination of Past Performance**
        Briefly present the administrative team's evaluation of the school's financial performance over the current contract period, including both significant successes and challenges.

- **Future Plans**
  Briefly present the administrative team's plans for continuously improving the school's financial health and maintaining current areas of excellence.

4. **Organizational Capacity:** Illustrate the school's governance structure and operations over the course of the current contract, as well as future plans regarding governance and operations. [Recommended page limit: 1]

   a. **Administrative Team Analysis**
      - **Examination of Past Performance**
        Briefly present the administrative team's evaluation of the school's organizational performance over the current contract period, including both significant successes and challenges.

      - **Future Plans**
        Briefly present the administrative team's plans for continuously improving the school's organizational health and maintaining current areas of excellence.

5. **Response to Evaluation:** After carefully examining the draft evaluation compiled by St. Thomas, provide any corrections or additional context you believe will assist St. Thomas in making a renewal decision. Please reference indicator numbers throughout. [Recommended page limit: 7-10]

   a. **Individual Indicators**
      In any area where the school scored below a 3 in the current year, provide information on how the school plans to meet the standard in the upcoming contract. In addition, if you believe an indicator from the current year was scored incorrectly, please provide information that would support an adjusted score. As schools are given an opportunity to correct evaluation scores each year, scores from earlier years of the contract cannot be adjusted.
   b. **Overall Trajectories**
      In any area where the school's performance trajectory is weak (trend is negative and either ends or remains below a 3) provide information on how the school plans to address the issue in the upcoming contract.
   c. **School Specific Goals**
      Suggest 1-2 annually measurable, rigorous academic goals that are aligned with this specific school's mission and vision. Goals must be specific, measurable, attainable, rigorous, and suitable for annual use (or have a target for each year of the contract).

## Evaluation Process

St. Thomas produces the final renewal evaluation using information from the contract renewal application, end-of-term site visit, and observations and documentation accumulated throughout the length of the contract. The evaluation is our opportunity to determine the extent to which the school is meeting St. Thomas's expectations of a high-quality academic program and well-managed organization. More specifically, we assess the school based on the measures included in

the Accountability System's Evaluation Rubric agreed upon by the school and St. Thomas at the time the contract was signed.

## Evaluation Rubric

The Evaluation Rubric included in the school's current contract with St. Thomas is the rubric utilized at the time of renewal.

## Length of Contract Renewal Guidelines

St. Thomas uses the results of the school's final evaluation to determine whether to renew its contract with a given charter school and if so, for what length of time. St. Thomas references the Length of Contract Renewal Guidelines document below as a guide in determining an appropriate contract length. In many cases a school will have characteristics from multiple areas of the guidelines document and professional judgement will be exercised. The guidelines document does not obligate the Board to a particular decision or length of contract and should not be construed as a requirement or guarantee. St. Thomas acts in accordance with *MN Statutes 124E*, and considers the performance of all students as the most important factor in determining contract renewal, with the additional statutory purposes as additional factors.

| Renewal Years | Indicators of School Performance |
|---|---|
| 5 Year Renewal | • Not on intervention status currently, or in the previous three years.<br>• Average evaluation score in each section (academic, financial, governance) of 2.5* or more<br>• Strong site visit observations over past contract term<br>• Meets all the terms of the contract and has not had any significant contract violations over the past three years<br>• No major concerns with academic, financial or Board governance<br>• Indicators of excellence are present (ie. MDE School Finance Award, Local/State/National Recognition of school, staff, students, etc.) |
| 4 Year Renewal | • Not currently on intervention; No interventions in previous two years.<br>• Average evaluation score in each section (academic, financial, governance) of 2.5* or more<br>• Strong site visit observations for the past two years.<br>• Meets all the terms of the contract<br>• No major concerns with academic, financial or Board governance |
| 3 Year Renewal | • Not currently on intervention; No more than one year on Intervention status in the past three years.<br>• Average evaluation score in at least two sections (academic, financial, governance) of 2.35 or more<br>• Concerns raised in site visit response or through ongoing oversight<br>• Meets the terms of the contract, with minor exceptions<br>• Concerns with academic, financial or Board governance, but school has strong plan in place to remedy |
| 2 Year Renewal | • Intervention level 1, 2, or not on intervention<br>• Average evaluation score in at least two sections (academic, financial, governance) of 2.25 or more<br>• Concerns raised in response to site visit or through ongoing oversight |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • Meets the terms of the contract, with minor exceptions<br>• Concerns with academic, financial or Board governance<br>• Minor outstanding requests or requirements |
| 1 Year Renewal | • Currently on intervention, any level<br>• Average evaluation score in any section (academic, financial, governance) of 2.0 or less<br>• "Concerns raised" in site visit response or through ongoing oversight<br>• Meets the terms of the contract, with one or more major exceptions<br>• Major concerns with academic, financial or Board governance<br>• Minor outstanding requests or requirements |
| Non-Renewal | • On intervention, any level<br>• Average evaluation score in one or more sections (academic, financial, governance) of 1.75 or less, or multiple sections below 2.0.<br>• Major concerns raised in response to site visit or through ongoing oversight<br>• Does not meet two or more terms of the contract<br>• Major concerns with academic, financial or Board governance<br>• Major outstanding requests or requirements<br>• Violations of law<br>• Concerns regarding student safety |

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Where can I learn more about St. Thomas and its authorizing philosophy?**
The best place to learn about St. Thomas's Authorizing Program is its webpage. We particularly encourage prospective applicants to read the 'about the St. Thomas Authorizing Program' section, our Authorizing Program Policy Manual, and profiles of the schools currently in our network. Time allowing, we are also happy to meet with applicant groups in person to discuss the application process and our authorizing philosophy.

Link to our webpage: https://education.stthomas.edu/about/impact/charter-school-authorizing/

**How can I ask questions and provide feedback to St. Thomas?**
Please direct any questions regarding application submission, process, timeline, or content to your school's St. Thomas liaison or tmoffatt@stthomas.edu. St. Thomas is always happy to answer questions and offer technical support throughout the application process. St. Thomas will not, however, proofread drafts or offer content-specific advice.

We are always looking to improve our processes and invite comments and suggestions at tmoffatt@stthomas.edu.

# VII. CONTRACT AMENDMENT PROCESS

St. Thomas strives to maintain consistency over the course of each contract period. As such, contracts are typically updated as part of the renewal process. However, St. Thomas understands that on occasion an amendment to the contract is necessary. Examples of areas in which changes would require an amendment include, but are not limited to, substantive modifications to the school information presented in Attachment 1 of the contract and adjustments or revisions of contract goals.

In order to facilitate potential changes, please complete to following steps:

1. Call your school's liaison to discuss changes under consideration.
2. Submit a letter signed by the Board chair and school director to your school's liaison that summarizes the requested change and provides rationale supporting the request. Please feel free to attach additional information that supports the case for the change.
3. St. Thomas staff will review the letter and follow-up via phone and/or email with questions and/or requests for additional information.
4. St. Thomas staff will complete a final review and determination whether to accept or deny the request.
5. St. Thomas will send a letter to the Board chair and school director that articulates the decision as well as identifies any next steps.

Please note that depending upon the requested change, the contract may have to be updated/modified and subsequently re-signed by the school and the University and submitted to MDE.

# VIII. CHANGE IN AUTHORIZER APPLICATION

Welcome to the University of St. Thomas (St. Thomas) Change in Authorizer Application. We appreciate your consideration of St. Thomas as authorizer for your school and are hopeful that you will find the application questions useful. St. Thomas is committed to authorizing high quality charter schools with proven results. St. Thomas will consider a Change in Authorizer Application only from existing charter schools that have a proven track record of success. These charter schools must be able to adequately demonstrate a history of strong academic success by students, show evidence of fiscal responsibility, and show evidence that there will be a strong alignment between the Authorizing Philosophy of the University and the vision and mission of the charter school.

St. Thomas has established a philosophy to guide its authorizing efforts that is founded on the core principles of charter schools and charter school authorizing, including the idea of autonomy in exchange for accountability. This philosophy, and the policies used to implement it, ensure that St. Thomas establishes an authorizing relationship with only top-quality schools whose mission and purpose are in alignment with the vision, mission, core values and tenets of the Authorizing Program and broader university. The philosophy is discussed in detail in the Charter School Authorizing Program Manual with key elements listed below for reference:

**Vision**
The vision of the University of St. Thomas Charter Authorizing Program is *to authorize excellent charters schools in order to increase quality educational opportunities for all children in the Twin Cities metro area. The University of St. Thomas Charter Authorizing Program strives to be a national model for quality authorizing and schools' authorizer of choice based on our competence, transparency, and respect for school autonomy.*

**Mission**
The mission of the University of St. Thomas Charter Authorizing Program is *to advance the common good by using quality authorizing practices and cross-sector university expertise to oversee and promote the health of charter schools that demonstrably assist students in reaching their full academic and human potential.*

**Core Values**
The core values below further define the vision and articulate key characteristics of the Authorizing Program.

- **Whole Student**. We work with schools committed to developing the whole individual in a way that allows students to meet their full human potential. Our schools have an unwavering commitment to academics as well as a focus on growing well-rounded students who are community-minded, problem-solvers, and leaders in pursuing a just society for all. We honor this value through a balanced approach to evaluation that values qualitative and quantitative data.

- **Educational Equity**. We work with schools that are committed to improving educational outcomes for all students, particularly those who have traditionally been underserved and are

most impacted by achievement and opportunity gaps. We honor this value by working with schools serving the community in which St. Thomas is located.

- **Portfolio of Options**. We work with schools that have an individual and local curricular focus that is unique and distinct in its ability to answer community needs. Our emphasis is quality and we prioritize outcomes and processes that respect students' dignity. We honor this value by authorizing a portfolio of schools with diverse educational philosophies and by making modifications to our metrics when necessary to allow rigorous and relevant measurement of success.

- **Empowered Autonomy**. We work with schools that desire high levels of autonomy and are willing to be held accountable using a transparent and comprehensive accountability framework. We believe decisions should be made at the lowest appropriate level and strive to ensure school-authorizer relations are based on mutual respect, trust, collaboration and humility. We honor this value by allowing School Leaders and Boards the freedoms provided by the charter law while maintaining a focus on the outcomes agreed to in the charter contract.

- **Excellence-First Authorizing**. We work within our organization to uphold rigorous standards, ensure the stability of the program, and continually evaluate our own policies and practices to ensure excellence. We honor this value by maintaining a staff-to-school ratio of 1:6, communicating program presence and results to university constituencies, employing quality and sector-conscious strategies when considering portfolio growth, and undertaking regular internal review of our program.

- **Reflective Practitioners**. We work as practitioners to share what we learn with the broader community and be thoughtful seekers and recipients of new ideas. We strive to foster a network among UST authorized charter schools that supports the sharing of best practices, offers technical assistance where appropriate, and facilitates collaboration while honoring school autonomy. We also seek to collaborate with our fellow authorizers and the charter community. We honor this value by dedicating time to research, interactions with sector organizations, professional development, hosting periodic gatherings for school leaders, and leveraging faculty and staff expertise.

**Tenets**
The following tenets highlight the characteristics St. Thomas seeks in the schools we authorize and guide our authorizing decisions and relationships.
- Promote Moral Responsibility
- Promote Critical Thinking
- Promote Wise Action
- Promote Skillful Work
- Advance the Common good

St. Thomas is pleased to accept change in authorizer applications for all types of charter schools without restrictions on the type of model, curriculum, or location of the proposed school, so long as they demonstrate alignment with our mission and authorizing philosophy. We are currently accepting applications for schools located in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

A charter school currently in operation in Minnesota under *MN Statutes 124E.10 Subd. 5*, may apply to St. Thomas for a change in authorizer under the following parameters:

*If the authorizer and the Board of Directors of a charter school serving enrolled students mutually agree not to renew the contract, or if the governing Board of an approved authorizer votes to withdraw as an approved authorizer for a reason unrelated to any cause under subdivision 4, a change in authorizers is allowed. The authorizer and the school Board must jointly submit a written and signed letter of their intent to the commissioner to mutually not renew the contract. The authorizer that is a party to the existing contract must inform the proposed authorizer about the fiscal, operational, and student performance status of the school, including unmet contract outcomes and other outstanding contractual obligations. The charter contract between the proposed authorizer and the school must identify and provide a plan to address any outstanding obligations from the previous contract.*

The Board of a charter school that meets the above conditions may submit a Letter of Intent to St. Thomas for a change in authorizer. If a Letter of Intent is approved by St. Thomas, the existing charter school Board will be invited to submit a full application for a change in authorizer. If the full application is approved, St. Thomas will submit an affidavit to the Minnesota Department of Education with the intent to authorize the charter school, per *MN Statutes*, *124E.10 Subd. 5*. At any point in the process, St. Thomas may deny authorization of a charter school without providing a reason for denial.

Instructions for completing and submitting a change in authorizer application follow. Please see the Review Process, Evaluation Rubric and Frequently Asked Questions sections for additional details. While the content of application is the responsibility of the school's leadership team, feel free to contact us with any questions about the process or clarifications around any of the application sections.

Thank you for your interest in St. Thomas, and for your desire to provide Minnesota's children with an excellent education.

## Timeline

Please note that the timelines included are intended to provide an idea of the general process and may vary from one review cycle to the next. Updated timelines are available by contacting the Director of Charter School Authorizing, or by checking the St. Thomas Charter Authorizing Program Website.

| Date | Action |
|---|---|
| On or before 2nd Friday in September | Letter of Intent Due to St. Thomas |
| First Week in October | Invitation to Submit Full Application Extended |
| 1st Business Day in November | **Full Applications Due to St. Thomas** |
| November | Applications reviewed based on St. Thomas's accountability framework |
| November | Site Visit Conducted |
| November-December | St. Thomas Charter Accountability Board moves to approve or deny Change in Authorizer application. Recommendation of Charter Accountability Board sent to Dean of College of Education, Leadership and Counseling, and St. |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Thomas President for final approval. Applicants not selected to move forward are notified. |
| December - January | Upon final approval from St. Thomas leadership, official notification will be provided to the charter School Board and an affidavit to the MN Department of Education will be prepared. |
| 105 Business Days Before End of Existing Contract (Approximately February 1) | **Submit Affidavit to MDE** |

*Minnesota Statutes 124E.10 Subd. 5* establishes the following submittal requirements which drive St. Thomas's change in authorizer application timelines, t*he proposed contract must be submitted at least 105 business days before the end of the existing charter contract. The commissioner shall have 30 business days to review and make a determination. The proposed authorizer and the school shall have 15 business days to respond to the determination and address any issues identified by the commissioner. A final determination by the commissioner shall be made no later than 45 business days before the end of the current charter contract. If the commissioner does not approve a change in authorizer, the school and the current authorizer may withdraw their letter of nonrenewal and enter into a new contract. If the commissioner does not approve a change in authorizer and the current authorizer and the school do not withdraw their letter and enter into a new contract, the school must be dissolved according to applicable law and the terms of the contract.*

## Instructions

As detailed under the Application Elements section, St. Thomas's change in authorizer application process into includes two parts: a letter of intent and a full application. Instructions for formatting and submitting each part follows.

**Formatting and Submitting Letter of Intent**
- Letter of Intent should be a maximum of five pages (attachments do not count towards the page limitation).
- Letter of intent must be typed on white 8.5''X11'' paper with 1-inch page margins and a minimum 12-point font size.
- Letter of intent must be submitted in MS Word or PDF format.
- Use large font, bold, italics, underlining, or another consistent method of making headings clear to the reader.
- Page numbers must be provided throughout the document.

Please email one copy (PDF or Microsoft Word format) of the Letter of Intent to:

tmoffatt@stthomas.edu

To be considered, the letter of intent must be received by the deadline specified for the desired application cycle (see the Timeline section).

**Formatting and Submitting of Full Application:**

- Application should be a maximum of 25 pages (attachments do not count towards the page limitation).
- Application must be typed and single or 1.5 spaced on white 8.5''X 11'' paper with 1-inch page margins and a minimum 11-point font size.
- Application must be submitted in MS Word or PDF format.
- Use large font, bold, italics, underlining, or another consistent method of making headings clear to the reader.
- Page numbers must be provided throughout the document.
- Clearly label each section and subsection of the application contained in the Narrative/Work Plan (i.e.: III. Financial Viability, etc.).
- Provide a table of contents at the start of the application listing the page where each section and sub-section can be found.
- Clearly label each attachment with its number and title (i.e.: Attachment #1 – School MCA Data).
- Attachments do not count toward page limits.
- Properly cite any sources that are referenced using MLA, APA, or another commonly accepted format.
- Prior to submitting an application, please ensure that you are familiar with the MN Charter School Law (*MN Statutes §124E*) and MN Open Meeting Law (*MN Statutes Chapter 13D*).
- If a particular question does not apply to your application, please state, "not applicable," and provide a brief rationale.

Please also submit via email one electronic copy (PDF or Microsoft Word format) to:

tmoffatt@stthomas.edu

The emailed application must be received by the submission deadline in order for the application to be considered. Receipt of complete applications will be confirmed within two business days of the submission deadline.

## Application Elements

As noted in the instructions above, St. Thomas's Change in Authorizer Application process includes three parts: a letter of intent, a full application and a site visit. A description of the required content for the letter of intent and full application as well as an overview of the site visit structure is provided below.

## Letter of Intent to Change Authorizer

St. Thomas is committed to authorizing high quality charter schools with proven results. St. Thomas will consider a Change in Authorizer Application only from charter schools that are able to adequately illustrate strong academic standing and fiscal responsibility. If an existing charter School Board is not able meet any of the three requirements listed below, the Board must make a compelling case in the Letter of Intent explaining why St. Thomas should consider an application for a change in authorizer.

The charter school Board must submit a letter to St. Thomas stating the reason for the request to submit an application for a change in authorizer. The Letter of Intent should be *no more than five pages* and state **how the school's mission, vision and programing align with the St. Thomas' Authorizing Program philosophy** and why the school believes St. Thomas would be an appropriate authorizer for the school. In its Letter of Intent, the charter school Board must verify that:

1. **The school has a fund balance of at least 12 percent in the last audited fiscal year as indicated in the school's most recent financial audit.** If the school's fund balance is below 12 percent, please provide a description of the extenuating circumstances that have led to the current balance and the school's plan for increasing the fund balance in the future.

2. **The school successfully supports students in attaining academic proficiency and strong academic growth as illustrated in the school's MDE report card and internal quantitative metrics.** If the school has been identified for MDE support, please provide a description of the circumstances and a summary of the plan to make improvements in student achievement.

3. **The school supports students in becoming well-rounded individuals who are community-minded, problem-solvers, and leaders in pursuing a just society for all.**

Additionally, applicants must provide the following attachments to the Letter of Intent:

- **Mutual Agreement to terminate or not renew a contract.** The outgoing authorizer and the active charter school Board must submit a statement to St. Thomas stating their intent to terminate or not renew the charter school contract. This must be a joint letter, signed and dated by the responsible parties.

- **Evaluation of Existing Performance prepared by the outgoing authorizer.** Per the Charter School Law (*124E.10 Subd. 5*) the outgoing authorizer must inform St. Thomas "about the fiscal and operational status and student performance of the school."

- The most recent year's completed **financial audit and annual report**.

If an existing charter school Board is not able meet any of the three requirements listed above, the Board must make a compelling case in the Letter of Intent explaining the reasons for not meeting these requirements along with a rationale stating the reason why St. Thomas should consider the school for authorization.

**Site Visit**
St. Thomas will conduct a site visit to the school prior to a decision on the application. This site visit may be completed during the review of the Letter of Intent or full application phase. The purpose of a site visit is to observe the learning program and meet with key stakeholders including Board Members, teachers, parents, school leadership, and business office staff. St. Thomas will follow its formal site visit protocol when conducting this visit. A representative of the St. Thomas Authorizing Program will contact the school to schedule the visit and provide details on the formal site visit protocol.

**Full Application**
The following application should be completed and submitted to St. Thomas by charter schools not currently authorized by St. Thomas, who wish to switch their authorizing status to St. Thomas and have received approval of their Letter of Intent. *Maximum length for the full application is 25 pages, excluding attachments.*

Below are the elements that must be included in the application narrative and appendices. Follow instructions carefully and do not exceed the page maximum. Please use section and sub-section outline headings throughout your application. The chart below summarizes each element and page limits. This is followed by a detailed description of each element.

| Application Elements | Page Limit |
|---|---|
| **I.   Executive Summary** | 1-2 |
| **II.  Learning Program – Is the learning program a success?**<br>  A.   Academic Progress<br>  B.   Plans to Support a Strong Learning Program | 6-10 |
| **III. Financial Viability – Does the school exhibit strong fiscal health?** | 6-10 |
| **IV. Governance & Operations – Is the organization effective and well run?**<br>  A.   Governance<br>  B.   Operations<br>  C.   Plans to Maintain High Quality Governance and Operations | 6-10 |
| **TOTAL PAGES** | **25** |
| **V.  Attachments** | |
| • Annual Reports from Prior Years | NA |
| • Financial Audits from Prior Fiscal Years | NA |
| • Board Minutes from the last 12 months | NA |
| • Current Bylaws | NA |
| • Strategic Plan (if applicable) | NA |
| • Articles of Incorporation | NA |
| • A copy of the school's admissions policies and procedures | NA |
| • Completed draft of Application Information Summary | NA |

The application should discuss the progress the school has made, existing and future challenges, and how it has responded directly to any concerns/challenges that it has faced over the term of the contract with its outgoing authorizer. For example, if a school has had major financial problems, it might devote more space to discussing how the issue has been addressed and/or resolved. If the outgoing authorizer states any concerns about the performance of the charter school or Board in documentation to St. Thomas, we will require the Board to respond to those concerns.

## I.   EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Please provide a brief narrative highlighting the school's accomplishments over the previous contract period with the non-St. Thomas Authorizer. Include a statement of how you believe having the University of St. Thomas as your school's authorizer would enhance your school program.*

## II.   LEARNING PROGRAM – Is the learning program a success?

### A. Academic Progress
Please report on the school's academic progress over the term of the last contract with the current authorizer. Wherever applicable, you may reference your annual reports (indicate the year and page number).

- List the school's accountability plan goals for the learning program (both the standards-based assessment and school/mission-specific goals) and results over the entire term of the contract. Please provide any graphs or charts that may help illustrate your results. Comment on any trends noticed over this period of time as well as significant factors that may have had an impact on the results (both positive inputs and challenges faced).

- Discuss the school's progress with meeting the academic goals of special populations (students who qualify for special education or English learner services). How does the school's academic program support efforts to meet Individual Education Plan goals and other goals for progress? Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations with respect to these populations? Again, comment on any significant factors that may have had an impact on the results (both positive inputs and challenges faced).

- Discuss the school's student attendance and retention rates over the term of the contract. Provide any graphs, charts or other artifacts that may help illustrate your results. Comment on any trends noticed over this period of time as well as significant factors that may have had an impact on the results (both positive inputs and challenges faced). Comment on how the school's practices are designed to equitably recruit and retain students over time.

- Discuss the ways in which the school supports students in becoming well-rounded individuals who are critical thinkers and community-minded problem-solvers and leaders in pursuing a just society for all.

- Discuss the ways in which the school supports success for all students including those who identify as members of a BIPOC, GLBTQIA, immigrant, or other community.

### B. Plans to Support a Strong Learning Program
Please report on how the school plans to support a strong learning program focused on results through the next contract period.

- Discuss any programmatic changes the school plans to make in the next contract period to support success in the learning program.

- Describe how your school will use assessment data to drive improvements and/or make staffing decisions.

- Describe how the school will assess the instructional practices of staff.

- Describe how the school will assess its overall culture and success in serving all students.

## III. FINANCIAL VIABILITY – Does the school exhibit strong fiscal health?

Please report on the school's financial oversight and management over the term of the contract. Wherever applicable, you may reference your annual reports or financial audits (indicate the year and page number).

- Over the course of the contract has the school maintained a balanced budget? Provide each fiscal year's June 30 and this year's most recent income and expense reports along with corresponding Board-approved budgets as evidence of maintenance of a balanced budget. Please provide any graphs or charts that may help illustrate your results. If the school has engaged in deficit spending, indicate the year(s) and describe the circumstances under which this occurred.

- Has the school maintained a strong fund balance so as to minimize the use of a line of credit or loan? Please report the school's end-of-year fund balance for each of the years of the contract. Does the Board have an established fund balance policy? Please attach this policy. If the school has been in Statutory Operating Debt at any time during the course of the contract, please provide an explanation of factors that contributed to this status and an update on the school's current status.

- Discuss the results of the school's financial audits and any findings the school has had over the course of the contract. Also, indicate whether the school received "clean" audits and whether there were any material weaknesses on the reports on internal controls. If applicable, please describe the corrective actions taken to improve the status of the school's financial audit findings and the results of those actions.

- Discuss the school's ability to meet the St. Thomas expectations for reporting of financial documents. To what extent has the school consistently provided Board financial documents (income/expense reports, cash flow, register of checks issued, etc.) at least three days prior to Board meetings? Comment on any significant factors that may have had an impact on the school's ability to meet this requirement.

- Describe how the school Board appropriately oversees the school's financials. What training have new and existing Board members received? How is the Board structured to ensure that a significant body of people have strong working knowledge of the school's financials (i.e. describe the Board's committee structure and treasurer's involvement in oversight). Please report on how the organization plans to maintain financial viability through the next contract period.

- Discuss any programmatic changes the school plans to make in the next contract period to support the financial viability of the school (e.g. systems for proper reporting to the state).

- Describe how the Board plans to oversee the school's financials in the future and if any structural or procedural changes will be made.

- Describe how the school and Board will maintain the necessary expertise to properly oversee and manage the school's financials.

## IV. GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS – Is the organization effective and well run?

### A. Governance

Please report on the school's governance over the term of the contract. Wherever applicable, you may reference your annual reports or financial audits (indicate the year and page number).

- Describe how the Board is working to meet the requirements of *MN Statutes 124E.07*, including provisions surrounding ongoing training. If any Board Members attended training that was not Department-approved please provide information on the type of training, length of time, and topics covered. Please indicate if any Board members (whether new or established prior to the enactment of this law) have not yet received training. Describe the steps taken to ensure that all Board members meet the intent of this law this fiscal year.

- Does the Board maintain proper governance records? What information is included and how does the Board use this to properly govern the school?

- Describe the school's governance model, including committee structure, and include the Board bylaws that establish the governance. How does the chosen governance model support quality oversight and strategic guidance of the school?

- How often has the Board reviewed its bylaws and policies over the course of the contract? Describe the Board's process for these reviews.

- Over the course of the contract has the Board engaged in strategic planning, mission/vision review, and/or goal setting for the school? Provide a brief narrative of the results of this strategic planning process and how it has affected the school's overall mission, vision, and/or focus. Provide a copy of the strategic plan if applicable.

- Describe the Board's self-review process and narrative outlining the results of this review over the course of the contract.

- Describe the Board's process for evaluating the executive director. What information is used in the process, and how does the Board use the results to drive staffing decisions? Please attach the Board's Director evaluation policy and process. If applicable, please describe the Board's professional development plan for the lead administrator.

- Please ensure that the school has been in compliance with all applicable state statutes over the course of the contract. If the school is not in compliance or has been out of compliance at any point in time, please describe the circumstances under which this occurred, and the corrective action taken. Has the school been cited with violation of any state and federal laws? If so, please explain the circumstances.

## B. Operations

Please report on the school's operations over the term of the contract. Wherever applicable, you may reference your annual reports or financial audits (indicate the year and page number).

- Discuss the level of parent satisfaction in the school and report on the results of your school's parent surveys. How satisfied are parents with the school program, how has this level of satisfaction changed over the course of the contract, and what factors do you believe have affected these changes? Describe programmatic strategies the school uses to keep parents informed of the school's and their child's progress.

- Provide the school's teacher retention rates over the course of the current contract and comment on any trends noticed over this period of time as well as significant factors that may have had an impact on the results (both positive inputs and challenges faced). Are all the teachers in the school appropriately licensed? Please describe any challenges in finding appropriately licensed teachers.

- Discuss the school's physical plant and comment on the changes made over the course of the contract to improve the physical learning environment. What major/minor changes have been made to support student learning and what challenges does the school continue to face?

- Describe the school's admission policies and practices and how the school complies with *Minnesota Statutes 124E.11*. If the school has an interview, orientation, or placement process, indicate how the school supports an admissions process free of selection criteria.

- Describe how the school seeks to provide an open, welcoming environment for students of all backgrounds through curriculum selection, staff/Board trainings, staff/Board structure and composition, opportunities for community feedback, thoughtful enrollment processes, and other school policies and practices.

## C. Plan to Maintain High Quality Governance and Operations

Please report on how the organization plans to maintain high quality governance and supportive operations through the next contract period.

- Discuss any programmatic or governance changes the school plans to make in the next contract period to support quality governance (e.g. discussions of a new governance model). Describe how the school and Board will maintain the necessary expertise to provide proper and appropriate governance and meet its fiduciary responsibilities.

- *Discuss any programmatic or governance changes the school plans to make in the next contract period to support effective and well-run operations (e.g. facilities renovation).*

*What operational challenges do you anticipate the school will face over the next contract period and what strategies exist to address those challenges?*

## V.  ATTACHMENTS

All applicants must provide the following items to the application:

- **Annual Reports from Prior Years.** The school submitted its most recent annual report with the Letter of Intent.  Please provide two additional reports to allow St. Thomas to assess the school's academic and operational history (ie: If the most recent report is from SY2024, provide reports from SY2023 and SY2022).
- **Financial Audits from Prior Fiscal Years.** The school submitted its most recent fiscal audit with the Letter of Intent.  Please provide audits from to two years prior to allow St. Thomas to assess the school's financial history.
- **Board Minutes from the last 12 months.**
- **Current Bylaws.**
- **Strategic Plan (if applicable, as referenced above)**
- **Articles of Incorporation**
- **A copy of the school's admission policies and procedures.**
- **Completed draft of Application Information Summary.** This document describes the key information from your original charter—the heart of what defines your school. Please request a copy of the Attachment 1 Contract Template from your authorizer contact if it was not included with your invitation to submit a full application.

## Review Process

The University of St. Thomas (St. Thomas) utilizes a rigorous review process to examine Change in Authorizer Applications and makes determinations regarding whether a proposal should be approved or declined.  St. Thomas reserves the right to deny authorization of a charter school at any point in the process without providing a reason for denial.

Each application cycle consists of the following elements:

- **Receipt of Letter of Intent.**  Upon receipt of the charter school's Letter of Intent, St. Thomas will begin the process of reviewing the contents of the letter, and may choose to visit the school, using St. Thomas's existing protocols for school visits, prior to determining whether to invite the Board to submit a full application.  The Letter of Intent will be reviewed by program staff and representatives of the St. Thomas Charter Accountability Board (CAB), and a determination will be made whether or not to invite the charter school to submit a full application*.*  If a Letter of Intent fails to demonstrate potential alignment with the St. Thomas mission and authorizing philosophy, after conferring with the St. Thomas Charter Accountability Board (CAB) and Dean, staff may notify the founding team that the school would not qualify for St. Thomas authorization.
- **Site Visit**.  St. Thomas will conduct a site visit to the school prior to a decision on the application.  This site visit may be completed during the review of the Letter of Intent or full application phase.  The purpose of a site visit is to observe the learning program and meet with key stakeholders including Board members, teachers, parents, school leadership, and business office staff.  St. Thomas will follow its formal site visit protocol when conducting this visit (see Program Manual for additional information).  A representative of

the St. Thomas Authorizing Program will contact the school to schedule the visit and provide details on the formal site visit protocol.

- **Application Receipt and Review for Completeness.** St. Thomas receives a Change in Authorizer Application and staff conduct a review for completion and compliance with application guidelines. Applications which clearly do not meet requirements (ie: are missing sections, do not adhere to application guidelines, etc.) are not reviewed. If an application is rejected during the completeness review, the submitting school will be promptly notified.

- **Application Evaluation.** St. Thomas will use information provided in the Letter of Intent, Change in Authorizer Application, and related attachments, as well as information gained from the site visit to perform an evaluation using the St. Thomas School Evaluation Rubric (see Program Manual for additional information).

- **Staff Recommendation and Decision Process.** The Director of Charter School Authorizing gathers all data collected in the process of reviewing a school's Application to Change Authorizers and completing the St. Thomas School Evaluation Rubric. If the data supports a recommendation to change authorizers, a recommendation is made by the Director of Charter School Authorizing to the Charter Accountability Board/School of Education Dean to approve the application. Upon approval of the application, the recommendation is then forwarded to the University's President, who makes the final decision and executes all subsequent contracts for authorization between the University and the school.

## Evaluation Rubric

Data and information included in the Letter of Intent, Change in Authorizer Application, and related attachments, as well as data and information gained from the site visit will be used to perform an evaluation using the St. Thomas School Evaluation Rubric (see Program Manual for additional information).

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Will I have a chance to make additions or changes to my application after the submission deadline?**
No. Once the submission deadline has passed, no changes may be made. Please double-check your application to ensure that all materials are included, clearly marked, and in the proper order prior to submitting.

**Do I have to follow the order of the application questions exactly?**
Yes. The St. Thomas application is arranged to facilitate our understanding of the school model being proposed, as well as allow for efficient review by internal and external experts. Applications which do not follow the required format, contain incomplete information, or are missing attachments may be disqualified and removed from the review process. St. Thomas reserves the right to reject any applications that are incomplete or substantially diverge from application specifications prior to internal/external expert review. Additionally, all applicants are encouraged to review the Evaluation Rubric prior to submitting their application in order to ensure that responses address all criteria.

**Can I apply to more than one authorizer? If I do, will it hurt my chances of receiving authorization from St. Thomas?**

The relationship between a charter school and authorizer is critically important and functions best when trust and mutual respect are present. For this reason, St. Thomas encourages school Boards to learn as much as possible about the mission, vision, philosophy, and operating policies and procedures of any entity to which it intends to apply for authorization. If the School Board believes it is aligned with more than one authorizing entity, St. Thomas does not prevent or discourage the team from submitting multiple applications, nor does it penalize founding teams who apply to more than one authorizer. We do require that applicants disclose the names of authorizers to which they have applied or intend to apply.

**Where can I learn more about St. Thomas and its authorizing philosophy?**
The best place to learn about St. Thomas's Authorizing Program is its webpage. We particularly encourage prospective applicants to read the 'about the St. Thomas Authorizing Program' section, our Authorizing Program Policy Manual, and profiles of the schools currently in our network. Time allowing, we are also happy to meet with applicant groups in person to discuss the application process and our authorizing philosophy.

Link to our webpage: https://education.stthomas.edu/community-partnerships/charter-school-authorizing/

**If I submit a letter of intent, do I have to submit a full application?**
The letter of intent is intended to communicate your interest in and intention to submit an application to St. Thomas; however, there is no obligation to submit a full application should your circumstances change. As the letters of intent are primarily used to determine the number of applications we will receive, we greatly appreciate notification via email or phone if you no longer intend to submit an application.

**How can I ask questions and provide feedback to St. Thomas?**
Please direct any questions regarding application submission, process, timeline, or content to tmoffatt@stthomas.edu. In addition, we are always looking to improve our processes and invite comments and suggestions from applicants. If there are additional questions you believe would have assisted your organization in showcasing its proposal, or language you believe could have been clarified, please send your suggestions—as well as a citation for the part of the application to which your comment pertains—to tmoffatt@stthomas.edu.

# IX. EXPANSION APPLICATION

Welcome to the University of St. Thomas (St. Thomas) Expansion Application process. A charter school currently authorized by the St. Thomas may request to expand the scope of its program through the creation of additional sites or grade levels, including an officially recognized prekindergarten (PK) or preschool instructional program (PI).

The purpose of this application process is twofold. First, to provide St. Thomas with the information necessary to determine whether the proposed program expansion will meet authorizer and state requirements, and second, to collect information that will be necessary for crafting a supplemental affidavit in the event that St. Thomas approves the application. The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) provides authorizers with detailed instructions on the requirements for expansion requests. The criteria outlined below are aligned with these requirements in order to facilitate a more streamlined process for schools. The school may find it useful to examine the 'Supplemental Affidavit Instructions,' the 'Early Childhood Heath and Development Screening Program Request Instruction' and other supporting documents available through MDE.

Instructions for completing and submitting the Expansion Application follow. Please see the Review Process, Evaluation Rubric, and Frequently Asked Questions sections for additional details. While the content of the application is the responsibility of the school's leadership team, feel free to contact us with any questions about the process or clarifications around any of the application sections. Thank you for your commitment to providing Minnesota's children with an excellent education.

In order to successfully expand, St. Thomas' expectation is that schools will be performing well against contract goals, including an average of 3.0 or greater on Academic Performance indicators over the past three years while demonstrating strength across both qualitative and quantitative indicators. If a school's academic performance does not meet this threshold, submission of additional compelling data will be required.

## Timeline

The St. Thomas Charter Accountability Board will follow a timeline of action to inform the requesting charter school of the status of their request to expand its program. Please note that the timelines included are intended to provide an idea of the general process and may vary from one review cycle to the next. Updated timelines are available by contacting the Director of Charter School Authorizing, or by checking the St. Thomas Charter Authorizing Program Website.

| Date | Action |
|---|---|
| First Business Day in June (of the year prior to planned implementation) | **Expansion Application Due to St. Thomas** |
| June-July | Application Review |

| | |
|---|---|
| July | Follow up requests for information, interviews and/or site visits with Requesting Charter School Representatives and St. Thomas |
| August | St. Thomas Charter Accountability Board moves to approve or deny Expansion Application. |
| September | Upon final approval from St. Thomas leadership, official notification will be provided to the charter School Board and a Supplemental Affidavit will be prepared for the MN Department of Education. |
| October 1 | **Supplemental Affidavit Submitted to MDE** |

*MN Statutes 124E.06 Subd. 5(a)* establishes the following submittal requirements which drive St. Thomas's site/grade expansion application timelines: *A charter school may apply to the authorizer to amend the school charter to add grades or primary enrollment sites beyond those defined in the original affidavit approved by the commissioner. After approving the school's application, the authorizer shall submit a supplemental affidavit in the form and manner prescribed by the commissioner. The authorizer must file a supplemental affidavit to the commissioner by October 1 to be eligible to add grades or sites in the next school year.*

## Instructions

Instructions for formatting and submitting St. Thomas's Expansion Application are below:

- Application must be typed, spaced 1.0 on white 8.5''X11'' paper with 1-inch page margins and a minimum 12-point font size.
- Application must be submitted in MS Word or PDF format.
- Use large font, bold, italics, underlining, or another consistent method of making headings clear to the reader.
- Page numbers must be provided throughout the document.
- Applications must contain all of the information requested in elements A-E below in order to be considered.

Please email one copy (PDF or Microsoft Word format) of the Application to: tmoffatt@stthomas.edu.

To be considered, the application must be received by the deadline specified for the desired application cycle (see the Timeline section).

## Application

The following application should be completed and submitted to St. Thomas by charter schools currently authorized by St. Thomas who wish to expand the scope of their school program to include an additional primary enrollment site or grades. This includes the addition of an instructional preschool program to provide early childhood education and preparation for transition to kindergarten for children ages 3 – 5 and/or an instructional prekindergarten program for four-year olds to prepare children for entry into kindergarten the following year. Applications must be received by **the first business day in June of** the school year prior to the implementation of the proposed expansion. Below are the elements that must be included in the application narrative

and appendices. The chart below summarizes each element.  This is followed by a detailed description of each element.

| Application Elements |
|---|
| **I. Executive Summary** |
| **II. Demonstration of Need and Projected Enrollment**<br>    A.   Need/Demand<br>    B.   Enrollment Process |
| **III. Evaluation of Academic & Other Performance Areas**<br>    A.   Academic Performance<br>    B.   Faculty |
| **IV. Evaluation of Legal and Fiscal Performance**<br>    A.   Current Financial Position<br>    B.   Reporting<br>    C.   Audit Findings<br>    D.   Facilities and Services<br>    E.   Faculty<br>    F.   Budget and Cash Flow Projections |
| **V.  Evaluation of Governance and Management**<br>    A.   Board Capacity<br>    B.   Management Capacity |
| **VI.  Key Components of Proposed PK/PI Instructional Program**<br>    A.   Daily Schedule<br>    B.   Comprehensive Child Assessment<br>    C.   Intentional Instructional Practice<br>    D.   Kindergarten Transition<br>    E.   Community Coordination<br>    F.   Staff Ratios & Licensure<br>    G.   Teacher Content Knowledge<br>    H.   Completion of Early Childhood Screening<br>    I.   Provision of Early Childhood Screening (if applicable) |
| **VII.  Key Components of Proposed Grade/Site Expansion**<br>    A. Expansion Overview and Philosophy<br>    B. Curriculum and Assessment Selection<br>    C. Teacher Credentials and Content Knowledge<br>    D. Communication Strategies |
| **VIII.   Attachments**<br>    •   Current Faculty Organizational Chart<br>    •   Proposed Faculty Organizational Chart<br>    •   Current School Board Roster<br>    •   Budget and Cash Flow with Expansion<br>    •   Budget and Cash Flow without Expansion |

> - Application Information Summary Draft (Contract Attachment #1)
> - Additional Information

## I.  Executive Summary

Provide an overview of the proposed expansion including impacts on enrollment, faculty and facilities.  Include an explanation of how the expansion forwards your school's mission and a brief rationale for such an expansion at this time.  *Strong responses will include all required elements and be no more than two pages long.*

## II.  Demonstration of Need and Projected Enrollment

Present a compelling reason and need for the expansion.

### A.  Need and Demand

**(For Site Expansion):**

Provide a market need and demand study that includes the six elements stated in MN Statute 124E.02. The study includes the following for the proposed location of the additional site that supports all of the proposed grades, sites, and programs:

- Current and projected demographic information;
- Student enrollment patterns;
- Information on existing schools and types of educational programs currently available;
- Characteristics of proposed students and families;
- Availability of properly zoned and classified facilities; and
- Quantification of existing demands for the expansion

**(For Grade Expansion):**

Provide the need for additional grade with supporting long-range enrollment projections by

- Describing the need for the grade expansion in the school and community. "Need" means the reason the expansion is necessary for the school and community to be served.
- Providing long range enrollment projections with and without the proposed grade expansion.
- Including evidence to support the need for the grade expansion that demonstrates a strong likelihood the school will achieve and maintain its enrollment projections with the proposed expansion.

*Strong responses will be thoughtful, comprehensive, and clear in answering questions such as: What value will the expansion add to the school as a whole?  How will this expansion enhance student learning? Why is this expansion necessary at this time?*

### B.  Enrollment Process *(for prekindergarten/preschool instructional programs and site expansions only)*

PreK/preschool only: provide information on whether the program will be free to all participants or fee based.  If fee-based, include the fee structure that will be used.  Indicate whether the school intends to provide enrollment preference to kindergarten for students participating in a free early learning program as allowed per *MN Statutes 124E.11(c)*. Include the enrollment process and describe how students will be made aware of whether enrollment in the school's PK/PI program does/does not guarantee a student's 'spot' in the K-12 program.

Site expansions only: provide information on how the school will handle multi-site enrollment and any proposed Board policies on the topic.  Indicate how the school will

determine when students attend one site vs. the other (i.e.: parent choice, geographic considerations, etc.).

*Strong responses will demonstrate the school's legally compliant enrollment program and a clear plan for communicating with families around enrollment issues.*

## III. Evaluation of Current School Academic and Other Performance Areas

Provide information about the school's current level of effectiveness.

### A. Academic Performance

Provide evidence of student academic achievement using longitudinal data from <u>statewide assessments under chapter 120B</u> (i.e.: MCA proficiency results) as well as school-selected assessment. Please note that for data to be considered 'longitudinal' it must involve at least three years of results. Supporting narrative should accompany all data. Include charts, graphs, and tables as necessary.

*Strong responses will include a multi-year analysis of MCA data which demonstrates positive student performance and growth over time. If applicable, additional data may be included to further demonstrate improved performance and growth. A strong supporting narrative should accompany the data in this section, and any areas of low performance or growth must be fully explained, along with the school's plans to address these issues.*

### B. Faculty

Provide evidence that current teachers are appropriately licensed or have received appropriate waivers from the Minnesota Board of Teaching.

## IV. Evaluation of Legal and Fiscal Performance

A charter school requesting an expansion must provide evidence of being fiscally sound and demonstrate the financial capacity to implement the expansion.

### A. Current Financial Position

A <u>brief</u> overview of the school's current position including fund balance history, budgeting history, and cash flow projections. *Again, you need not provide in-depth information on items already available to St. Thomas through quarterly reports, Board packets, etc.*

### B. Reporting

Identify the extent to which the school met all compliance reporting deadlines.

### C. Audit Findings

Discuss of any current/unsatisfied audit findings and the school's approved corrective action plan. *If the school has no findings it need not include this section.*

### D. Facility and Services

Describe how the expansion will affect the school's overall facilities plan and whether an additional site or build-out of the current site will be needed. If applicable, identify the potential location(s) and an analysis of the facility options considered. Describe how the expansion will impact the school's transportation, food service and other services. Describe how the school will continue to comply with health and safety regulations.

E.  **Faculty**
Describe how the expansion will affect staffing needs, including the need to hire additional teachers, managers and support staff. ***Include brief job descriptions for each staffing change. Attach a copy of the current faculty organizational chart and the proposed organizational chart that reflects the expansion.*** The proposed organizational chart should include teacher names and assignments for existing faculty and the position titles and assignments for new faculty (i.e. Teacher – Social Studies). If the expansion will take place over a number of years, clearly note when additional positions will be added (i.e. Teacher—Social Studies, SY2025) and when the expansion is expected to be complete with full enrollment attained.

F.  **Budget and Cash Flow Projections**
Two sets of budget and cash flow projections must be included, one showing the school as it currently exists (no expansion), and another including the school as proposed (with expansion). Each set of budget and cash flow projections must extend a minimum of four fiscal years into the future (five years total, including current year).

Budgets should reflect full fiscal years and include line items, subtotaled by category. A narrative must accompany the budgets that contains a detailed description of the implications of expanding/not expanding. Detailed budget assumptions should also be referenced in the narrative. If the school plans to pursue MN Parent Aware Rating (which established eligibility for Early Learning Scholarships) note this intent. For early learning programs describe the schools plans to fund the program.

*A strong response will make clear that the school has a realistic plan in place for funding the expansion without harming current programs.*

## V.  Evaluation of Governance and Management
Provide evidence that the school has the governance and management capacity to implement the expansion.

A.  **Board Capacity**
Describe the extent to which the school has a successfully functioning Board including, but not limited to, 1) how the Board was involved in the determination to pursue the present expansion as a part of its long term strategy for the school, 2) adequacy of membership by skill sets, 3) fulfillment of training requirements and 4) the extent of member involvement in Board and committee meetings. ***Attach a copy of the current school board roster*** which includes member names and positions on the Board.

B.  **Management Capacity**
Include a description of how the proposed expansion will be staffed and overseen, including discussion of any additional positions that will be created or restructured.

*Strong responses will provide an overview of the school's current governance and management structures and describe any anticipated changes resulting from the proposed expansion. For example, an organizational chart showing who will supervise program staff would be useful. This section need not cover information St. Thomas already has available through recent evaluations and Quarterly Reports and may cite these reports as needed.*

**VI.    KEY COMPONENTS OF PROPOSED PREKINDERGARTEN/PRESCHOOL INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM** *(for prekindergarten and preschool instructional programs only)*

At the start of this section, provide information regarding the preschool program's philosophy and how it will enhance the school's ability to meet its mission and vision. In addition, provide an outline of how the proposed program and its staff will interact with the existing school community and meet the needs of the particular group of students to be served. Finally, provide a brief statement of how the school will know if the PK/PI program is successful and whether or not the school intends to seek a parent aware rating for the program.

The elements below are particularly critical for the success of the school's application as they are required by both St. Thomas and the Minnesota Department of Education. Please provide clear and comprehensive descriptions of the school's plans to address the eight elements listed below.

## A. Daily Schedule

Provide a sample schedule for the proposed program, showing the amounts of time dedicated to various activities (ie: freeplay, snack, storytime, etc.). If the program's schedule will differ from day to day, show a weekly schedule.

*A strong response will provide adequate detail to allow a reviewer to understand how the program will operate and what types of activities students will engage in throughout the day/week.*

## B. Comprehensive Child Assessment

Address how the program will assess each child's cognitive skills with a comprehensive child assessment instrument when the child enters, and before the child leaves the program to inform program planning and promote kindergarten readiness.

- Describe the assessment process used to measure individual child progress in all the prekindergarten and preschool instructional classes that includes the use of a standardized child assessment instrument, such as High Scope Child Observation Record (COR), Teaching Strategies Gold, or Work Sampling System.
    - The assessment must be used at least at program entrance and program exit.
    - At a minimum, the comprehensive assessment should measure children's progress in the domains of language, literacy, and mathematical thinking. Other domains may include approaches to learning, general cognitive development, physical and motor development, social and emotional development, creativity, and the arts.
    - The child assessment should be one approved by Minnesota Parent Aware. It must be a valid and reliable child assessment instrument that is developmentally appropriate and comprehensive.
    - The comprehensive child assessment must align with Minnesota's Early Childhood Indicators of Progress – Minnesota's Early Learning Standards, Revised 2017.

- Describe how the child assessment results are used to inform curricula and instruction throughout the school year.
- Describe how families are involved in the assessment process throughout the year.
- Describe how assessment results are shared between the early learning and kindergarten staff in order to maximize the building of a coherent system between early learning and kindergarten.
- Describe how the child assessment process is responsive to the cultural and linguistic needs of children in the school's early learning program.

*A strong response will cover all of the requested information above in a clear and cohesive manner.*

## C. Intentional Instructional Practice

Provide intentional instructional practice aligned with the state early childhood learning standards and kindergarten standards and that is based on early childhood research and professional practice focused on children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills and development and prepares children for the transition to kindergarten, including early literacy skills.

- Describe how program content and intentional instructional practices are aligned with Minnesota's ECIPs.
  - o The school should consider using Minnesota Parent Aware aligned curricula.
- Briefly describe the curriculum used in the early learning program, such as High Scope Preschool Curriculum or Opening the World of Learning (OWL).
- Indicate how the ECIPs are incorporated into the program based on the age of children participating in the early learning program.
- Provide an overview of instructional practice to support children's early literacy skills development.
- Describe a balance of child-initiated learning and teacher-directed pedagogies appropriate for young children's development and interests.
- Provide a brief overview of the program's early learning approaches (such as use of project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, learning centers, interactive learning, and play-based learning).

*A strong response will cover all of the requested information above in a clear and cohesive manner.*

## D. Kindergarten Transition

- Briefly describe the program plan for transition to kindergarten that includes meaningful coordination and planning with kindergarten teachers, and engages families in a variety of ways to support children's learning and successful transition to kindergarten.
  - o The transition plan should be responsive to the cultural and linguistic diversity of children and their families participating in the early learning program and school.
- Describe how the curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices between the early learning program and kindergarten program are aligned.

- Describe strategies to engage families in meaningful ways to support their children's learning throughout the transition into the kindergarten year beyond one-time events.
- Describe a plan for providing guidance to families not enrolling their child in the charter school kindergarten program.
- If a free program, indicate if the charter school will provide enrollment preference to kindergarten for students participating in the early learning program as allowed by Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.11(c).

*A strong response will cover all of the requested information above in a clear and cohesive manner.*

### E. Community Coordination
Provide a plan for coordinating with relevant community-services including how information will be made available to families using a variety of strategies and (if necessary) languages.

*A strong response will include referrals to community programs based on child needs, such as local public health, social services, mental health services, or other early learning or child care programs. A brief description of how the program coordinates with community organizations and shares resources with families is included. Strategies may include family advocates, school-home liaisons, parenting educators, social media, school events, and more.*

### F. Staff Ratios and Licensure
Ensure staff-child ratios of one-to-ten and maximum group size of 20 children with the staff supervised by a licensed early childhood teacher. Reference Section 3B: Governance and Management, as necessary.

- Briefly describe how the early learning program is provided and how ratios and group size are provided to ensure a high-quality early learning program.
- For each prekindergarten and preschool instructional class, describe staff licensure area and MN teaching license file folder number and other credentials, as appropriate. If this information is not available at the time of submission, please indicate anticipated staffing licensure areas. MDE may require the school to submit staff licensure areas and MN teaching license folder numbers and other credentials when staff is hired.

*A strong response will respond to all areas above in a clear and cohesive manner.*

### G. Teacher Content Knowledge
Have teachers knowledgeable in early childhood curriculum content, assessment, and instruction.

*A strong response will describe licensed staff training on early learning curriculum, instructional practices, and or assessment that has been completed in the past five years or will be completed prior to the start of service. If not available, indicate anticipated teacher knowledge in these areas. Note that the*

*school will be responsible to submit evidence of teacher knowledge to MDE when instructional staff is hired.*

**H. Completion of Early Childhood Screening**
Ensure participating children have completed health and developmental screening within 90 days of program enrollment under *MN Statutes section 121A.16 to 121A.19.*

*Strong responses will provide a description of how participating children receive health and developmental screening through a traditional school district or comparable screening from health care provider (such as a Child and Teen Checkups), if the screening is not being provided by the charter school. It is not necessary for the charter school to provide the health and developmental screening, but must describe how children receive the comprehensive health and developmental screening to identify possible problems that may interfere with children's learning. Provide a plan for any children who do not successfully complete early childhood screening, including how referrals will be made. If the school will provide screening, ensure that information on the qualifications of related staff are included in the Governance and Management/Staff Ratios and Licensure sections of this application.*

**I. Provision of Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening (if applicable)**
Describe the school's plan and capacity to provide the Early Childhood Screening program in accordance with *MN Statutes, sections 121A.16 to 121A.19* and *MN Rules 3530.3000, 3530.3300, and 3530.3400.*

*Strong responses should include a description of how the school will meet MDE accountability requirements for data submission in accordance with MN Statutes, section 121A.17. This includes the establishment of the MARSS Preschool Screening (PS) Record and the annual data submission to MDE Early Learning Services for children receiving the Early Childhood Screening program directly from the school or through a contracted service provider with a comparable screening program, such as a local public health organization. The purpose of establishing the MARSS PS Record is to provide screening state aid to the school and to ensure the screening requirement has been met. (More detail on establishing the MARSS PS Record is described in MARSS Procedure 26).*

# VII. Key Components of Proposed Grade/Site Expansion

**A. Expansion Overview and Philosophy**
Drawing on the executive summary as needed, describe the expansion and how it will align with and benefit the existing school. Clearly articulate any areas in which the expansion will require a different approach or philosophy from the existing school, particularly if the grades served represent a different developmental need than the existing grades (i.e. an elementary adding a middle school).

**B. Curriculum and Assessment Selection**

Describe the curriculum selected for core academic areas. Note how this curriculum was selected and how it aligns with or compliments other curricula in use (particularly in grades adjacent to those impacted by the expansion). Describe how the school will assess student outcomes and what specific tools and assessments will be used.

**C. Teacher Credentials and Content Knowledge**
Have teachers licensed and knowledgeable in relevant areas of curriculum content, assessment, and instruction. Describe training that will or has taken place. Describe how teachers staffing the expansion will possess (or gain) relevant experience and licensure in the necessary areas.

**D. Communication Strategies**
Describe how the school has communicated the potential expansion to stakeholder groups. If approved, what additional communication will take place for both internal and external stakeholders.

## VIII. Attachments
All applicants must attach the following items to the application:

- **Current Faculty Organizational Chart**. The current faculty organizational chart should include current teacher names and assignments.

- **Proposed Faculty Organizational Chart (for the new site/grade level expansion).** The proposed faculty organizational chart should include current teacher names and assignments for existing faculty and the position titles and assignments for proposed new faculty (ex. Teacher—social studies).

- **Current School Board Roster**. The current School Board roster should include member names and positions on the Board.

- **Budget and Cash Flow Projection Without Expansion**. Budgets should reflect full fiscal years and include line items, subtotaled by category. A narrative must accompany the budgets that contains a detailed description of the implications of not expanding.

- **Budget and Cash Flow Projection With Expansion**. Budgets should reflect full fiscal years and include line items, subtotaled by category. A narrative must accompany the budgets that contains a detailed description of the implications of expansion.

- **Completed draft of Application Information Summary.** This document describes the key information from your original charter—the heart of what defines your school. Please request a copy of the Attachment 1 Contract Template from your authorizer liaison.

- **Additional information deemed relevant by the school.** This could include, but is not limited to copies of parent survey materials, information on selected curriculum, etc.

## Review Process

The University of St. Thomas (St. Thomas) utilizes a rigorous review process to examine Expansion Applications and makes determinations regarding whether a proposal should be approved or declined.  Each application cycle consists of the following elements:

- **Application Receipt and Review for Completeness:** St. Thomas receives an application and staff conduct a review for completion and compliance with application guidelines. Applications which clearly do not meet requirements (ie: are missing sections, do not adhere to application guidelines, etc.) are not reviewed and are returned to the school for amendment.
- **Follow-Up Interviews, Request for Additional Information and/or Site Visit.**  St. Thomas staff or the Charter Accountability Board may choose to ask for additional materials, conduct follow-up interviews, and/or make a site visit to further gather information.
- **Application Evaluation:**  St. Thomas will use information provided in the application, annual and quarterly reports and annual evaluations, as well as information gained from the site visit to review the proposal and complete the evaluation rubric included with the application process.
- **Staff Recommendation and Decision Process:** Program staff gather all data collected in the process of reviewing a school's application and completing the rubric.  If the data support a recommendation to expand, a recommendation is made by the Director of Charter School Authorizing to the Charter Accountability Board/Dean to approve the application. Upon approval of the application, the recommendation is then forwarded to the University's President, who makes the final decision and executes all contracts for authorization between the University and the school.
- **Supplemental Affidavit:** If the application is approved, St. Thomas will then begin crafting an early learning program request to be submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education.

## Evaluation Rubric

As noted in the Review Process section above, St. Thomas CAB and staff will use the attached scoring rubric to determine whether the application meets standards and provides a compelling case for adding the proposed program.  It is important to note that in order to be approved all sections of the application must demonstrate that the applicant is prepared to meet the standard.

## Expansion Application Evaluation Rubric

**Instructions for Application Reviewers**
Please review the following criteria to rate applicant responses to the Request for Proposals. Within each section, specific criteria define the expectations for a strong response that "Meets the Standard."

| Rating | Characteristic |
|---|---|
| 4 = Exceeds Standard | Meets and goes beyond required criteria.  Provides clear and comprehensive information on the section presented, including a level of detail that demonstrates an understanding of key issues and strongly suggests that the proposed program will be successful.  Where applicable, outside sources of information are cited and used to bolster the information shared.  All elements of the application are addressed thoroughly. |
| 3 = Meets Standard | Meets all required criteria, is clear, reasonably comprehensive, and demonstrates a solid grasp of key issues.  Any weaknesses are unlikely to impact the successful implementation of the proposed program. |
| 2 = Partially Meets Standard | Addresses most, but not all, required criteria and may be missing important information or have weaknesses that could adversely impact the success of the proposed program. |
| 1 = Does Not Meet Standard | Meets some or none of the required criteria.  Important information is missing, lack of preparation is evident, and/or the application has weaknesses that would adversely impact the success of the proposed program. |

In each section, mark the number 1-4 indicating your impression of the applicant's response. Provide brief comments to support your ratings in the right-hand column, citing page numbers from the application as appropriate to support your comments.


**Name of Applicant:**

**Name of School(s):**

**Name of Reviewer:**

**Date:**

| EXPANSION APPLICATION NARRATIVE | RATING & COMMENTS (Cite application page numbers as appropriate) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I. Executive Summary** | | | | |
| Provides an overview of the proposed expansion including impacts on enrollment, faculty and facilities. Include an explanation of how the expansion forwards your school's mission and a brief rationale for such an expansion at this time.<br><br>*Strong responses* will include all required elements and be no more than two pages long. | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |
| **II. Demonstration of Need and Projected Enrollment** | | | | |
| **A. Need & Demand (Projected Enrollment)**<br>Presents a compelling reason for the **_site expansion_** including a description and evidence of need which include:<br>　　Current and projected demographic information;<br>　　Student enrollment patterns;<br>　　Information on existing schools and types of educational programs currently available<br>　　Characteristics of proposed students and families<br>　　Availability of properly zoned and classified facilities; and<br>　　Quantification of existing demand for the school or site.<br><br>Presents a compelling reason for **_the grade expansion_** that supports long-range enrollment projections:<br>　　Describes the need for the grade expansion in the school and community. "Need" means the reason the expansion is necessary for the school and community to be served.<br>　　Provides long range enrollment projections with and without the proposed grade expansion.<br>　　Includes evidence to support the need for the grade expansion that demonstrates a strong likelihood the school will achieve and maintain its enrollment projections with the proposed expansion.<br><br>*Strong responses* will be thoughtful, comprehensive, and clear in answering questions such as: What value will the expansion add to the school as a whole? How will this expansion enhance student learning? and Why is this expansion necessary at this time? | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |
| <span style="color:white;background:red">*For prekindergarten and preschool instructional programs only*</span> | | | | |
| **B. Enrollment Process**<br>Provides information on whether the program will be free to all participants or fee based. If fee-based, include the fee structure that will be used. Indicate whether the school intends to provide enrollment preference to kindergarten for students participating in a free early learning program as allowed per *MN Statutes 124E.11(c)*. Include the enrollment process and describe how students will be made aware of whether enrollment in the school's PK/PI program does/does not guarantee a student's 'spot' in the K-12 program. | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Strong responses* will demonstrate the school's legally compliant enrollment program and a clear plan for communicating with families around enrollment issues. | |

| III.  Current School Academic and Other Performance Areas | |
|---|---|
| Provides information about the school's current level of effectiveness. | |
| **A.  Academic Performance**<br>Provides evidence of student academic achievement using longitudinal data from statewide assessments under chapter 120B (ie:  MCA Proficiency Results.) as well as school-selected assessments.  Please note that for data to be considered 'longitudinal' it must involve at least three years of results.  A supporting narrative should accompany all data.<br><br>*Strong responses* *will include a multi-year analysis of MCA data, which demonstrates positive student performance and growth over time.  If applicable, additional data may be included to further demonstrate improved performance and growth.  A strong supporting narrative should accompany the data in this section, highlighting how the school is fulfilling its primary purpose "to improve all pupil learning and all student achievement" and explaining any areas of low performance or growth along with the school's plans to address these issues.* | *1        2        3        4* |
| **B.  Faculty**<br>Provide evidence that current teachers are appropriately licensed or have received appropriate waivers from the Minnesota Board of Teaching. | *1     2     3     4* |
| IV.    Legal and Fiscal Performance | |
| Provides evidence that the school is fiscally sound and has the financial capacity to implement the program within the bounds of state/federal funding restrictions. | |
| **A.  Current Financial Position**<br>Includes a brief overview of the school's current position, including the following: fund balance history, budgeting history, and cash flow projections.  Applicants need not provide in-depth information on items already available to St. Thomas through quarterly reports, etc.<br><br>*Strong responses* *will highlight evidence of alignment with the performance standards and the financial outcomes in the school's contract with the authorizer.* | *1     2     3     4* |
| **B.  Reporting**<br>Identifies the extent to which the school met all compliance reporting deadlines. | *1     2     3     4* |
| **C.  Audit Findings**<br>Includes a discussion of any current/unsatisfied audit findings and the school's approved corrective action plan.  If the school has no findings it need not include this section. | *1     2     3     4* |
| **D.  Facilities** | *1     2     3     4* |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Provides a description of how the expansion will affect the school's overall facilities plan and whether an additional site or build-out of the current site will be needed. If applicable, the school identifies the potential location(s). Description of how the expansion will impact the school's transportation, food service and other services. Description of how the school will continue to comply with health and safety regulations. | | | | |
| **E. Faculty**<br>Describes how the expansion will affect staffing needs, including the need to hire additional teachers, managers and support staff. ***Include brief job descriptions for each staffing change. Attach a copy of the current faculty organizational chart and the proposed organizational chart that reflects the expansion.*** The proposed organizational chart should include teacher names and assignments for existing faculty and the position titles and assignments for new faculty (i.e. Teacher – Social Studies). | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |
| **F. Budget and Cash Flow Projections**<br>Includes two sets of budget and cash flow projections are included, one showing the school as it currently exists (no expansion), and another including the school as proposed (with expansion). Each set of budget and cash flow projections extend a minimum of four fiscal years into the future (five years total, including current year). Budgets reflect full fiscal years and include line items, subtotaled by category.<br><br>The narrative contains detailed description of the budgetary changes that result from the expansion. Includes letters of support/other forms of documentation for any outside funds the school has included in its budget. References budget development assumptions in the narrative as appropriate.<br><br>_Strong responses_ *will make clear that the school has a realistic plan in place for funding the additional program without harming current programs.*<br><br>_Strong responses_ *will answer any questions about where students will attend the program, whether any facilities beyond the school's current space will be necessary, and an analysis of the facility options considered and their cost.*<br><br>_Strong responses_ *for early learning program expansions will describe the school's plan to fund the program and indicate whether the program is free to all participants or fee-based. If fee-based, the plan includes the fee structure that will be used. If applicable, strong responses also describe the school's intent to pursue a* _Minnesota Parent Aware_ *rating for the early learning program and other possible funding sources to sustain the program if available, such as* _Early Learning Scholarships_, _Voluntary Prekindergarten_, _School Readiness Plus_, *and* _Title I_. | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |
| **V.    Governance and Management Performance** | | | | |
| Provides evidence that the school has the governance and management capacity to implement the expansion. | | | | |
| **A. Board Capacity**<br>Describe the extent to which the school has a successfully functioning Board including, but not limited to, 1) adequacy of membership by skill sets, 2) | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| fulfillment of training requirements and 3) the extent of member involvement in Board and committee meetings. ***Attach a copy of the current school board roster*** which includes member names and positions on the Board. | | | | |
| **B.  Management Capacity**<br>Includes a description of how the proposed expansion will be staffed and overseen, including discussion of any additional positions that will be created or restructured. | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |

| | |
|---|---|
| **VI.       Key Components of Proposed PK/PI Instructional Program** | |
| The start of this section in the Application should provide information regarding the preschool's program philosophy and vision.  In addition, it should provide an outline of how the proposed program and its staff will interact with the existing school community and meet the needs of the particular group of students to be served.  Finally, this section should provide a brief statement of how the school will know if the PK/PI program is successful and whether or not the school intends to seek a parent aware rating for the program. | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A.  Daily Schedule**<br>Applicant must provide a schedule for the proposed program, showing the amount of the time dedicated to various activities (ie:  freeplay, snack, storytime, etc.)  If the program's schedule differs from day to day, the applicant must include a weekly schedule.<br><br>*Strong responses* will provide adequate detail to allow a reviewer to understand how the program will operate and what types of activities students will engage in throughout the day and week. | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |
| **B.  Comprehensive Child Assessment**<br>Addresses how the program will assess each child's cognitive skills with a comprehensive child assessment instrument when the child enters, and before the child leaves the program to inform program planning and promote kindergarten readiness.  Indicates how families are involved in the assessment process throughout the year.  Describes how the child assessment process is responsive to the cultural and linguistic needs of children in the school's early learning program.<br><br>*Strong responses* will describe the assessment process used to measure individual child progress in all the prekindergarten and preschool instructional classes.  The response should detail the use of a standardized child assessment instrument, such as High Scope Child Observation Record (COR) and/or Teaching Strategies Gold or Work Sampling System at program entrance and program exit.  The child assessment should be one <u>approved by Minnesota Parent Aware</u> and must be a valid and reliable child assessment instrument that is developmentally appropriate and comprehensive.  The assessment must align with <u>Minnesota's Early Childhood Indicators of Progress – Minnesota's Early Learning Standards (Revised 2016)</u>.<br><br><u>At a minimum</u>, the comprehensive assessment should measure children's progress in the domains of language, literacy, and mathematical thinking.  Other domains may include approaches to learning, general cognitive development, physical and motor development, approaches to learning, social and emotional development, and creativity in the arts. | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **C. Intentional Instructional Practice**<br>Provides intentional instructional practice aligned with the state early childhood learning standards and kindergarten standards and that is based on early childhood research and professional practice focused on children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills and development and prepares children for the transition to kindergarten, including early literacy skills.<br><br>*Strong responses* *will describe how program content and intentional instructional practices are aligned with the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress: Minnesota's Early Learning Standards (ECIPs) available on the MDE website and include a very brief description of the curriculum used in the early learning program, such as Teaching Strategies Gold, High Scope, Opening the World of Learning (OWL). Indicate how the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress: Minnesota's Early Learning Standards (ECIPs) are incorporated into the program. Provide an overview of instructional practice to support children's early literacy skills development.* | | | | |
| **D. Kindergarten Transition**<br>Coordinate appropriate kindergarten transition with parents and kindergarten teachers.<br><br>*Strong responses* *will describe the program plan for transition to kindergarten that is responsive to the culture and linguistic diversity of students and families and includes meaningful coordination and planning with kindergarten teachers and a description of how the program will engage families in a variety of ways to support children's learning and successful transition to kindergarten. Also include information on how the school will ensure that parents understand attending PK/PI with your school does not guarantee their child's enrollment in your K program.* | | | | |
| **E. Community Coordination**<br>Provides a plan for Coordinating with Relevant Community-Based Services.<br><br>*Strong responses* *will include referrals to community programs based on child needs, such as local public health, social services, mental health services, or other early learning or child care programs. A brief description of how the program coordinates with community organizations and how information is shared with families is included.* | | | | |
| **F. Staff Ratios and Licensure**<br>Ensures staff-child ratios of one-to-ten and a maximum group size of 20 children with the first staff required to be a licensed early childhood teacher. Reference section IIIB Governance and Management, as necessary. A strong response will briefly describe how the prekindergarten or preschool instructional program is provided and how ratios and group size are provided to ensure a high-quality early learning program. For each prekindergarten and preschool instructional class, describe staff licensure and other credentials, as appropriate. | | | | |

| | |
|---|---|
| **G. Teacher Content Knowledge**<br>Have teachers knowledgeable in early childhood curriculum content, assessment, and instruction.<br><br>*Strong responses will briefly describe how the prekindergarten or preschool instructional program is provided and how ratios and group size are provided to ensure a high-quality early learning program. For each prekindergarten and preschool instructional class, describe staff licensure and other credentials, as appropriate.* | *1    2    3    4* |
| **H. Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening**<br>Ensures participating children have completed health and developmental screening within 90 days of program enrollment under *MN Statutes section 121A.16 to 121A.19*.<br><br>If the charter school will provide Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening, describes the school's plan and capacity to do so in accordance with all elements of MN Statutes 121A.16-121A.19 and Minnesota Rules 3530.3000, 3530.3300, and 3530.3400.<br><br>*Strong responses will provide a description of how participating children receive health and developmental screening through a traditional school district or comparable screening from health care provider (such as a Child and Teen Checkups), if the screening is not being provided by the charter school. It is not necessary for the charter school to provide the health and developmental screening, but must describe how children receive the comprehensive health and developmental screening to identify possible problems that may interfere with children's learning. Provide a plan for any children who do not successfully complete early childhood screening. If the school will provide screening, ensure that information on the qualifications of related staff are included in the Governance and Management/Staff Ratios and Licensure sections of this application.* | *1    2    3    4* |
| **I. Provision of Early Childhood Screening (if applicable)**<br>Describes the school's plan and capacity to provide the Early Childhood Screening program in accordance with *MN Statutes, sections 121A.16 to 121A.19* and *MN Rules 3530.3000, 3530.3300, and 3530.3400.*<br><br>*Strong responses should include a description of how the school will meet MDE accountability requirements for data submission in accordance with MN Statutes, section 121A.17. This includes the establishment of the MARSS Preschool Screening (PS) Record and the annual data submission to MDE Early Learning Services for children receiving the Early Childhood Screening program directly from the school or through a contracted service provider with a comparable screening program, such as a local public health organization. The purpose of establishing the MARSS PS Record is to provide screening state aid to the school and to ensure the screening requirement has been met. (More detail on establishing the MARSS PS Record is described in MARSS Procedure 26).* | *1    2    3    4* |
| **VII.    Key Components of Proposed Grade/Site Expansion** | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A. Expansion Overview and Philosophy**<br>Describes the expansion and its alignment with and benefit to the existing school.  Articulates any areas in which the expansion will require a different approach or philosophy from the existing school (i.e.: if the ages to be served in the expanded model are considerably older/younger than current population). | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |
| **B. Curriculum and Assessment Selection**<br>Describes the curriculum selected for the core academic areas including how it was selected and how it aligns with or compliments curricula currently in use (particularly in grades adjacent to those impacted by expansion). Describes how the school will assess outcomes and what specific tools/assessments will be used. | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |
| **C.  Teacher Credentials and Content Knowledge**<br>Describes the use of teachers licensed and knowledgeable in relevant areas of curriculum and content, assessment, and instruction.  Describes training that has taken (or will take) place.  Describes how teachers staffing the expansion will possess or gain relevant experience and licensure in necessary areas. | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |
| **D.  Communication Strategies**<br>Describes how the school has communicated the potential expansion to stakeholder groups.  Describes communication plan for both internal and external stakeholders if approval is granted. | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |

**As noted in the application, the St. Thomas Charter Accountability Board and program staff will use applicable sections of the school's annual report and other available information to determine the likelihood of a successful expansion.**

**Do I have to follow the order of the application questions exactly?**
Yes. The St. Thomas application is arranged to facilitate our understanding of the school model being proposed, as well as allow for efficient review. Applications which do not follow the required format, contain incomplete information, or are missing attachments may be disqualified and removed from the review process. St. Thomas reserves the right to reject any applications that are incomplete or substantially diverge from application specifications prior to internal/external expert review. Additionally, all applicants are encouraged to review the Evaluation Rubric prior to submitting their application in order to ensure that responses address all criteria.

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) provides authorizers with detailed instructions on the requirements for supplemental affidavit submissions. St. Thomas aligned the information requested in the application with these requirements in order to facilitate a more streamlined process for schools. The school may find it useful to examine the supplemental affidavit instructions and FAQ documents, which are available through MDE at this link: Charter School Supplemental Affidavit Instructions

**If our charter school has a currently operating prekindergarten or preschool instructional program do we need to apply for official recognition?**
Yes. On December 31, 2012, Commissioner Brenda Cassellius provided official notification that MDE's guidance regarding Early Learning Programs operated by charter schools had changed and that authorizers would now be responsible for overseeing "all programs implemented by a charter school, including a charter school's pre-kindergarten and preschool instructional programs."

Contact St. Thomas at 651-962-4372 or tmoffatt@stthomas.edu with any questions.

**Where can I learn more about St. Thomas and its authorizing philosophy?**
The best place to learn about St. Thomas's Authorizing Program is its webpage. We particularly encourage prospective applicants to read the 'about the St. Thomas Authorizing Program' section, our Authorizing Program Policy Manual, and profiles of the schools currently in our network. Time allowing, we are also happy to meet with applicant groups in person to discuss the application process and our authorizing philosophy.

Link to our webpage: https://education.stthomas.edu/about/impact/charter-school-authorizing/

**How can I ask questions and provide feedback to St. Thomas?**
Please direct any questions regarding application submission, process, timeline, or content to tmoffatt@stthomas.edu. In addition, we are always looking to improve our processes and invite comments and suggestions from applicants. If there are additional questions you believe would have assisted your organization in showcasing its proposal, or language you believe could have been clarified, please send your suggestions—as well as a citation for the part of the application to which your comment pertains—to tmoffatt@stthomas.edu.

# X. EXPANSION READY-TO-OPEN PROCESS

The University of St. Thomas (St. Thomas) is dedicated to working with approved charter schools within our network to ensure realization of the high quality, successful expansions.  The year leading up to the launch of an expansion is a critical time in which the school is laying the foundation for future performance.  As such, St. Thomas has developed a series of benchmarks and required actions to ensure key pieces of the expansion are in place prior to implementation. These items are aligned with St. Thomas' academic, financial and organization performance framework.

St. Thomas is committed to working with School Leadership and Boards throughout the planning year to ensure that all Expansion Ready-to-Open (RTO) benchmarks are met and the school is prepared to implement the expansion successfully.  In the event that the school is unable to satisfy the Expansion RTO benchmarks, the opening of the expansion may be delayed by one year or voided entirely by the authorizer based on circumstances and progress towards expansion.

The Expansion RTO timeline, process and benchmarks are detailed below.

## Timeline

Please note that the timelines included are intended to provide an idea of the general process and may vary from one cycle to the next.  Updated timelines are available by contacting the Director of Charter School Authorizing, or by checking the St. Thomas Charter Authorizing Program website.

| Date | Action |
|---|---|
| August | Notification of Expansion Approval |
| October 1 | Submittal of Affidavit to MDE |
| Monthly | Ongoing monitoring of progress towards RTO checklist by St. Thomas staff through meetings (in-person and/or via phone) by St. Thomas staff. |
| 1 Week Prior to RTO Meeting | All information and supporting documentation sent to St. Thomas verifying attainment of benchmarks. |
| No later than 6-8 Weeks Prior to First Day of Operations | **Expansion Ready-to-Open Meeting** |
| Within 2 Weeks of Expansion RTO Meeting | Final Determination of Expansion RTO issued |

## Expansion Ready-to-Open Benchmarks

The Expansion RTO benchmarks consist of six areas of critical importance, which are aligned with the detailed checklist used during the start-up period. In order to open, the school must demonstrate its satisfaction of each area. A summary of the areas is provided below (see the Expansion Ready-to-Open Benchmark Requirement Detail, which follows, for a full description of each item and required documentation):

1. **Enrollment** in the expanded program is sufficient to allow for financial viability and programmatic integrity.
   - Confirmed enrollment is at or above the minimum number acceptable per the school's contingency budget for lowest possible operating enrollment.

2. **Board governance** is competent, compliant with law and prepared to oversee the expansion.
   - Necessary Board policies, procedures, and bylaws are in place and approved by the Board.
   - Appropriate insurance is in place.
   - If partnering with an external organization, Memorandum of Understanding that clearly articulates the roles and responsibilities of both parties has been executed.
   - A plan for academic oversight by the Board has been developed.
   - Expansion updates and any necessary approvals have regularly been a part of Board meetings
   - Board members understand the financial implications of the expansion if successful/unsuccessful

3. **Financial Management and Oversight** is adequate to ensure the fiscal health of the school.
   - A contingency budget for the lowest operating enrollment has been developed.
   - Updated transportation plan to include the expansion (the school has secured bussing either through the resident district or an alternative vendor)
   - Updated food services plan to include the expansion

4. **Appropriate facility** has been acquired and the lease signed.
   - St. Thomas has received a copy of the lease, received the opportunity to review and comment as specified by contract, and has no significant concerns.
   - Should the expansion include a facility project, St. Thomas is a provided with a copy of the Certificate of Occupancy and has been kept informed of relevant developments in terms of the cost and progress of the project.
   - Facility is safe (e.g. all building inspections have been satisfactorily completed), suitable to receive students and adequate for the program model.

5. **Learning program** elements are in place for meeting the mission of the school.
   - Student graduation/grade progression criteria have been identified and approved by the Board.
   - A standards-aligned curriculum scope and sequence has been developed for the expansion's academic program.

- Instructional strategies the school will use to meet academic goals have been identified.
- A Special Education and EL program have been developed.
- Professional development plans and a teacher evaluation system have been developed.
- An assessment system is in place that aligns with the curriculum.
- A plan is in place to meet World's Best Workforce (WBWF) requirements.
- All necessary materials (e.g. books, manipulatives, etc.) have been purchased and will be on-site prior to opening.
- Classroom environments are suitable for the mission-specific learning program.
- Student/family handbook has been updated to include the expansion

6. **Key staff** and majority of teachers have been hired.
   - The School Leader or leadership has been hired, if applicable.
   - At least 75% of staff members have been hired.
   - A plan is in place to hire any remaining staff well before the start of the year
   - Should any key personnel leave their role prior to the Expansion Ready-to-Open determination, the school will provide verification that the position has been filled by someone with similar experience and record of performance.

## Process

A charter school's ability to successfully fulfill the three primary components of its contractual agreement with St. Thomas – academic success, fiscal viability, and organizational aptitude –while expanding depends a great deal on what happens well before the expansion is implemented. To support School Leaders and Boards through the process, St. Thomas created an Expansion Ready-to-Open Checklist that identifies key activities. The tool also provides a relatively simple vehicle for St. Thomas oversight of expansion activities. Progress and completion of Expansion Ready-to-Open Checklist items will be reviewed regularly through the Pre-Expansion Oversight process outlined below and culminate with an Expansion Ready-to-Open meeting and the final decision regarding readiness to implement.

**Pre-Expansion Oversight**

Progress and completion of Expansion Ready-to-Open Checklist items will be monitored through the following:

- *School Leader Report*. The School Leader should maintain a master copy of the Expansion Ready-to-Open Checklist and send an up-to-date copy to St. Thomas prior to each monthly meeting.
- *Monthly Meetings with St. Thomas Staff*. School Leaders are required to have monthly check-in meeting with St. Thomas staff to review progress towards benchmarks and ensure the school is on-track.
- *Charter School Board Meetings*. School Boards are expected to review the Expansion Ready-to-Open Checklist items at all Board meetings and should be included in the School Leader or Board Chair report at every Board meeting whether the authorizer is present or not.

**Expansion Ready-to-Open Meeting**
A school's expansion planning period culminates in an Expansion RTO meeting which ensures that all benchmarks have been met and the school is prepared to implement the expansion

successfully. In the event that the school is unable to satisfy the Expansion RTO benchmarks the opening of the expansion may be delayed by one year or voided entirely by the authorizer based on circumstances and progress towards expansion.

Expansion RTO meetings are required to be structured as follows:

- *Attendees.* The following persons must attend the Expansion RTO meeting:
  - Board chair
  - Leadership Team (e.g. School Leader, Principal, Operations Manager)
  - St. Thomas representatives

  Additional Board members are welcome to attend; however, please be aware of Open Meeting Law requirements with respect to quorum.

- *Location and Format.* The Expansion RTO meeting will be held at the school site and will commence with a brief tour of the new/expanded school facility (if possible/applicable) followed by an opportunity for the school to demonstrate how each benchmark has been satisfied. The final portion of the meeting will be reserved for discussion of the school's progress. An Expansion RTO meeting will typically take 1.5-2 hours but may require additional time if the school is facing numerous or complex issues.

**Final Decision**
St. Thomas will issue a Final Determination of Readiness to Expand within two weeks of the Expansion RTO meeting. Schools unable to satisfy all criteria after this period will be allowed to open no sooner than the start of the following academic year, contingent on satisfaction of Expansion RTO benchmarks at that time.

## Expansion Ready to Open Benchmark Requirement Detail

| Benchmark | Criteria | Documentation | Submission Timeline |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1) Enrollment** is sufficient to allow for financial viability and programmatic integrity. | Enrollment is at or above the minimum number acceptable per the school's contingency budget for lowest possible operating enrollment (See pre-September checklist). | Current Budget being considered by the Board for the upcoming school year.<br><br>Contingency Budget<br><br>Current enrollment figures (based on families who have completely filled out enrollment forms—those who have indicated interest but have not formally enrolled may not be counted). | File with St. Thomas at least one week prior to RTO meeting. Paper copies of filled-out enrollment forms or an opportunity to review completed enrollment forms electronically will be necessary. Directory information for families may be requested if enrollment is close to minimum budget.<br><br>Bring copies of most updated figures to RTO meeting if changes have occurred. |
| **3) Board governance** is competent, compliant with law and prepared to oversee the expansion. | • Necessary Board policies, procedures, and bylaws are in place and approved by the Board.<br>• Appropriate insurance is in place.<br>• If partnering with an external organization, signed Memorandum of Understanding that clearly articulates the roles and responsibilities of both parties.<br>• A plan for academic and enrollment oversight by the Board has been developed.<br>• Expansion updates and any necessary approvals have regularly been a part of Board meetings<br>• Board members understand the financial implications of the expansion if successful/unsuccessful | Board policy handbook (documentation of policies added/revised due to the expansion)<br><br>Current bylaws, note any changes made if bylaws have been updated.<br><br>MOU<br><br>Academic oversight plan<br><br>Board meeting agendas and minutes | At least one week prior to RTO meeting. |
| **3) Financial Management and Oversight** is adequate to ensure the fiscal health of the school. | • A contingency budget for the lowest operating enrollment has been developed. | Copy of contingency budget.<br>Signed contract with vendor or resident school district agreement verification. | At least one week prior to RTO meeting. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | • Updated transportation plan to include the expansion (the school has secured bussing either through the resident district or an alternative vendor)<br>• Updated food services plan to include the expansion | | |
| **4) Appropriate Facility** acquired/Lease signed | • St. Thomas has received a copy of the lease, received the opportunity to review and comment as specified by contract, and has no significant concerns.<br>• Should the expansion include a facility project, St. Thomas is a provided with a copy of the Certificate of Occupancy and has been kept informed of relevant developments in terms of the cost and progress of the project.<br>• Facility is safe (e.g. all building inspections have been satisfactorily completed), suitable to receive students and adequate for the program model. | Signed Lease<br><br>Certificate of Occupancy<br><br>St. Thomas observation of site and discussion of improvements completed and underway<br><br>Board meeting minutes | At least one week prior to RTO meeting if changes were made to the lease St. Thomas reviewed and commented on. |
| **6) Learning program** elements are in place for meeting the mission of the school. | • Student graduation/grade progression criteria have been identified and approved by the Board.<br>• A standards-aligned curriculum scope and sequence has been developed for the expansion's academic program.<br>• Instructional strategies the school will use to meet academic goals have been identified.<br>• A Special Education and EL program have been developed.<br>• Professional development plans and a teacher evaluation system have been developed. | Graduation/grade progression policy<br><br>Curriculum and instruction plan that includes: scope and sequence, instructional strategies, SpEd and EL programming, professional development and evaluation, and assessment system.<br><br>Purchasing plan<br><br>Map of facility with classrooms identified | At least one week prior to RTO meeting. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | • An assessment system is in place that aligns with the curriculum.<br>• A plan is in place to meet World's Best Workforce (WBWF) requirements.<br>• All necessary materials (e.g. books, manipulatives, etc.) have been purchased and will be on-site prior to opening.<br>• Classroom environments are suitable for the mission-specific learning program. | | |
| **8) Key staff** and majority of teachers have been hired. | • The School Leader or leadership has been hired, if applicable.<br>• At least 75% of staff members have been hired<br>• A plan is in place to hire any remaining staff well before the start of the year<br>• Should any key personnel leave their role prior to the Expansion Ready-to-Open determination, the school will provide verification that the position has been filled by someone with similar experience and record of performance. | Complete expansion teacher licensure verification form attached as Appendix A<br><br>Include an all-staff listing with titles and positions remaining vacant | At least one week prior to RTO meeting. (reference June checklist) |

Appendix A
Expansion Teacher Licensure Verification

| Teacher Name | File Folder # | Subject or Specialty | Courses Taught | Grade(s) Taught | License Details |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sally Sample | 426777 | Math | Algebra I, Geometry | 6-7 | El-Ed K-6 and Math 5-8 (expires 6/30/2015) |
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# Expansion Ready to Open Checklist & Monthly Meeting Guide

| Benchmarks | Person/s Responsible | Status/Date | Summary of Progress |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1) Enrollment** | | | |
| • Enrollment is at or above the minimum number acceptable per the school's contingency budget for lowest possible operating enrollment (See pre-September checklist). | | | |
| **2) Board Governance** | | | |
| • Necessary Board policies, procedures, and bylaws are in place and approved by the Board. | | | |
| • Appropriate insurance is in place. | | | |
| • If partnering with an external organization, signed Memorandum of Understanding that clearly articulates the roles and responsibilities of both parties. | | | |
| • A plan for academic oversight by the Board has been developed. | | | |
| • Expansion updates and any necessary approvals have regularly been a part of Board meetings | | | |
| • Board members understand the financial implications of the expansion if successful/unsuccessful. | | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **3) Financial Management and Oversight** | | |
| • A contingency budget for the lowest operating enrollment has been developed. | | |
| • Updated transportation plan to include the expansion (the school has secured bussing either through the resident district or an alternative vendor) | | |
| • Updated food services plan to include the expansion | | |
| **4) Appropriate Facility** | | |
| • St. Thomas has received a copy of the lease, received the opportunity to review and comment as specified by contract, and has no significant concerns. | | |
| • Should the expansion include a facility project, St. Thomas is a provided with a copy of the Certificate of Occupancy and has been kept informed of relevant developments in terms of the cost and progress of the project. | | |
| • Facility is safe (e.g. all building inspections have been satisfactorily completed), suitable to receive students and adequate for the program model. | | |

| 5) Learning Program | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Student graduation/grade progression criteria have been identified and approved by the Board. | | | |
| • A standards-aligned curriculum scope and sequence has been developed for the expansion's academic program. | | | |
| • Instructional strategies the school will use to meet academic goals have been identified. | | | |
| • A Special Education and EL program have been developed. | | | |
| • Professional development plans and a teacher evaluation system have been developed. | | | |
| • An assessment system is in place that aligns with the curriculum. | | | |
| • A plan is in place to meet World's Best Workforce (WBWF) requirements. | | | |
| • All necessary materials (e.g. books, manipulatives, etc.) have been purchased and will be on-site prior to opening. | | | |
| • Classroom environments are suitable for the mission-specific learning program. | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **6) Key Staff** | | | |
| | • The School Leader or leadership has been hired, if applicable. | | | |
| | • At least 75% of staff members have been hired | | | |
| | • A plan is in place to hire any remaining staff well before the start of the year | | | |
| | • Should any key personnel leave their role prior to the Expansion Ready-to-Open determination, the school will provide verification that the position has been filled by someone with similar experience and record of performance. | | | |

# XI. CHARTER SCHOOL LOCATION CHANGE

Welcome to the University of St. Thomas (St. Thomas) Change in School Location Application process. A charter school currently authorized by the St. Thomas may request to change the charter school's location.

The purpose of this application process is twofold. First, to provide St. Thomas with the information necessary to determine whether the proposed change in the school's location will meet authorizer and state requirements, and second, to collect information that will be necessary for crafting a supplemental affidavit in the event that St. Thomas approves the application. The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has not yet provided detailed instructions on the requirements for the change in school location. Once MDE requirements are available, the criteria outlined below will be reviewed to ensure that it aligns with these requirements in order to facilitate a more streamlined process for schools. The school may find it useful to examine the 'Supplemental Affidavit Instructions,' and other supporting documents available through MDE.

Instructions for completing and submitting the Change in School Location Application follow. Please see the Review Process, Evaluation Rubric, and Frequently Asked Questions sections for additional details. While the content of the application is the responsibility of the school's leadership team, feel free to contact us with any questions about the process or clarifications around any of the application sections. Thank you for your commitment to providing Minnesota's children with an excellent education.

In order to successfully change location, St. Thomas' expectation is that schools will be performing well against contract goals, including an average of 3.0 or greater on Academic Performance indicators over the past three years while demonstrating strength across both qualitative and quantitative indicators. If a school's academic performance does not meet this threshold, submission of additional compelling data will be required.

## Timeline

The St. Thomas Charter Accountability Board will follow a timeline of action to inform the requesting charter school of the status of their request to change the school location. Please note that the timelines included are intended to provide an idea of the general process and may vary from one review cycle to the next. Should the school be required to relocate during the academic year due to non-renewal of its lease, the timeline described below is subject to modification. Additionally, in the event of an emergency that renders a facility unsafe for students or staff, please contact St. Charter Authorizing Program immediately to discuss the situation.

Updated timelines are available by contacting the Director of Charter School Authorizing, or by checking the St. Thomas Charter Authorizing Program Website.

| Date | Action |
|---|---|
| First Business Day in June (of the year prior to planned implementation) | **Change in School Location Application Due to St. Thomas** |
| June-July | Application Review |

| | |
|---|---|
| July | Follow up requests for information, interviews and/or site visits with Requesting Charter School Representatives and St. Thomas |
| August | St. Thomas Charter Accountability Board moves to approve or deny Change in School Location Application. |
| September | Upon final approval from St. Thomas leadership, official notification will be provided to the charter school Board and a Supplemental Affidavit will be prepared for the MN Department of Education. |
| October 1 | **Supplemental Affidavit Submitted to MDE** |

*Minnesota Statutes 124E.06 Subd.8* establishes the following submittal requirements which drive St. Thomas's Change in Location application timelines: <u>**Change in Location.** A developing, preoperational, or operational charter school with an approved affidavit must apply to its authorizer to change the charter school's location by submitting documentation, including a revised market need and demand study, to the authorizer for authorizer review and approval. The authorizer must establish a review process to ensure the location change will address market need and demand as well as the charter school's ongoing viability.</u>

## Instructions

Instructions for formatting and submitting St. Thomas's Change in School Location Application are below:

> Application must be typed, spaced 1.0 on white 8.5''X11'' paper with 1-inch page margins and a minimum 12-point font size.
> Application must be submitted in MS Word or PDF format.
> Use large font, bold, italics, underlining, or another consistent method of making headings clear to the reader.
> Page numbers must be provided throughout the document.
> Applications must contain all of the information requested in the elements below in order to be considered.

Please email one copy (PDF or Microsoft Word format) of the Application to:
tmoffatt@stthomas.edu.

To be considered, the application must be received by the deadline specified for the desired application cycle (see the Timeline section).

## Application

The following application should be completed and submitted to St. Thomas by charter schools currently authorized by St. Thomas who wish to change the charter school location. Applications must be received by **the first business day in June of** the school year prior to the implementation of the proposed change in school location. Should the school be required to relocate during the academic year due to non-renewal of its lease or event of an emergency that makes the facility unsafe, the June deadline is subject to modification. Below are the elements that must be included

in the application's narrative and appendices. The chart below summarizes each element.  This is followed by a detailed description of each element.

| Application Elements |
|---|
| **I. Executive Summary** |
| **II. Demonstration of Need and Projected Enrollment**<br>    A. Need & Demand |
| **III. Evaluation of Academic & Other Performance Areas**<br>    A. Academic Performance<br>    B. Faculty |
| **IV. Evaluation of Legal and Fiscal Performance**<br>    A. Current Financial Position<br>    B. Reporting<br>    C. Audit Findings<br>    D. Facilities and Services<br>    E. Faculty<br>    F. Budget and Cash Flow Projections |
| **V. Evaluation of Governance and Management**<br>    A. Board Capacity<br>    B. Management Capacity |
| **VI. Key Components of Change in Location**<br>    A. Change in Location Overview and Philosophy<br>    B. Communication Strategies |
| **VII. Attachments**<br>    Current Faculty Organizational Chart<br>    Proposed Faculty Organizational Chart<br>    Current School Board Roster<br>    Budget and Cash Flow with Change in Location<br>    Budget and Cash Flow with no Change in Location<br>    Application Information Summary Draft (Contract Attachment #1)<br>    Additional Information |

## I. Executive Summary

Provide an overview of the proposed charter school change in location including impacts on enrollment, faculty and facilities.  Include an explanation of how the change in school location forwards your school's mission and a brief rationale for such a change in school location at this time. *Strong responses will include all required elements and be no more than two pages long.*

## II. Demonstration of Need and Projected Enrollment

Present a compelling reason and need for the change in school location.

**A. Need and Demand:** Provide a market need and demand study that includes the six elements stated in MN Statute 124E.02. The study includes the following for the proposed location of the additional site that supports all of the proposed grades, sites, and programs:

> Current and projected demographic information;
> Student enrollment patterns;
> Information on existing schools and types of educational programs currently available;
> Characteristics of proposed students and families;
> Availability of properly zoned and classified facilities; and
> Quantification of existing demands for the change in school location.

Strong responses will be thoughtful, comprehensive, and clear in answering questions such as: What value will the change in location add to the school as a whole? How will this change in location enhance student learning? Why is this relocation necessary at this time?

Provide a description and evidence of the projected enrollment, by grade, including the numbers and ages of current students who intend on remaining at the school after the change in location and new students planning to apply after the change in location. Concrete evidence of demand such as current wait list numbers, survey data from current families about intention to reenroll, enrollment/waitlist statistics from surrounding schools, and other information that clearly demonstrates need and demand.

# III. Evaluation of Current School Academic and Other Performance Areas
Provide information about the school's current level of effectiveness.

### A. Academic Performance
Provide evidence of student academic achievement using longitudinal data from <u>statewide assessments under chapter 120B</u> (i.e.: MCA proficiency results) as well as school-selected assessment. Please note that for data to be considered 'longitudinal' it must involve at least three years of results. Supporting narrative should accompany all data. Include charts, graphs, and tables as necessary.

*Strong responses will include a multi-year analysis of MCA data which demonstrates positive student performance and growth over time. If applicable, additional data may be included to further demonstrate improved performance and growth. A strong supporting narrative should accompany the data in this section, and any areas of low performance or growth must be fully explained, along with the school's plans to address these issues.*

### B. Faculty
Provide evidence that current teachers are appropriately licensed or have received appropriate waivers from the Minnesota Board of Teaching.

# IV. Evaluation of Legal and Fiscal Performance
A charter school requesting a change in school location must provide evidence of being fiscally sound and demonstrate the financial capacity to implement the relocation

### A. Current Financial Position

A brief overview of the school's current position including fund balance history, budgeting history, and cash flow projections. *Again, you need not provide in-depth information on items already available to St. Thomas through quarterly reports, Board packets, etc.*

**B. Reporting**

Identify the extent to which the school met all compliance reporting deadlines.

**C. Audit Findings**

Discuss any current/unsatisfied audit findings and the school's approved corrective action plan. *If the school has no findings, it need not include this section.*

**D. Facility and Services**

Describe how the change in location will affect the school's overall facilities plan and whether an additional site or build-out of the proposed site will be needed. If applicable, identify the potential location(s) and an analysis of the facility options considered. Describe how the change in location will impact the school's transportation, food service and other services. Describe how the school will continue to comply with health and safety regulations.

**E. Faculty**

Describe how the change in location will affect staffing needs, including the need to hire additional teachers, managers and support staff or the need to terminate staff. ***Include brief job descriptions for each staffing change. Attach a copy of the current faculty organizational chart and the proposed organizational chart that reflects the change in location.*** The proposed organizational chart should include teacher names and assignments for existing faculty and the position titles and assignments for new faculty (i.e. Teacher – Social Studies).

**F. Budget and Cash Flow Projections**

Two sets of budget and cash flow projections must be included, one showing the school as it current location, and another including the school as proposed with change in location. Each set of budget and cash flow projections must extend a minimum of four fiscal years into the future (five years total, including current year).

Budgets should reflect full fiscal years and include line items, subtotaled by category. A narrative must accompany the budgets that contain a detailed description of the implications of remaining in the same location versus a change in location. Detailed budget assumptions should also be referenced in the narrative. *A strong response will make clear that the school has a realistic plan in place for funding the change in location without harming current programs.*

## V. Evaluation of Governance and Management

Provide evidence that the school has the governance and management capacity to implement the change in location.

**A. Board Capacity**

Describe the extent to which the school has a successfully functioning Board including, but not limited to, 1) how the Board was involved in the determination to pursue the present change of location as a part of its long term strategy for the school, 2) adequacy

of membership by skill sets, 3) fulfillment of training requirements and 4) the extent of member involvement in Board and committee meetings. ***Attach a copy of the current School Board roster*** which includes member names and positions on the Board.

B. **Management Capacity**
   Include a description of how the proposed change in location will be staffed and overseen, including discussion of any additional positions that will be created or restructured or eliminated.

*Strong responses will provide an overview of the school's current governance and management structures and describe any anticipated changes resulting from the proposed change in location. This section need not cover information St. Thomas already has available through recent evaluations and Quarterly Reports and may cite these reports as needed.*

## VI. Key Components of Proposed Charter School Change of Location

**A. Change of Location Overview and Philosophy**
   Drawing on the executive summary as needed, describe the change of location and how it will align with and benefit the school. Clearly articulate any areas in which the change in location will require a different approach or philosophy from the existing location.

**B. Communication Strategies**
   Describe how the school has communicated the potential change of location to stakeholder groups. If approved, what additional communication will take place for both internal and external stakeholders.

## VII. Attachments
All applicants must attach the following items to the application:

**Current Faculty Organizational Chart**. The current faculty organizational chart should include current teacher names and assignments.

**Proposed Faculty Organizational Chart (for the new site).** The proposed faculty organizational chart should include current teacher names and assignments for existing faculty and the position titles and assignments for proposed new faculty (ex. Teacher—social studies).

**Current School Board Roster**. The current School Board roster should include member names and positions on the Board.

**Budget and Cash Flow Projection With no Change in Location**. Budgets should reflect full fiscal years and include line items, subtotaled by category. A narrative must accompany the budgets that contains a detailed description of the implications of no change of location.

**Budget and Cash Flow Projection With Change in Location**. Budgets should reflect full fiscal years and include line items, subtotaled by category. A narrative must

accompany the budgets that contains a detailed description of the implications of change of location.

**Completed draft of Application Information Summary.** This document describes the key information from your original charter—the heart of what defines your school. Please request a copy of the Attachment 1 Contract Template from your authorizer liaison.

**Additional information deemed relevant by the school.** This could include, but is not limited to copies of parent survey materials, information on selected curriculum, etc.

## Review Process

The University of St. Thomas (St. Thomas) utilizes a rigorous review process to examine Change of Location Applications and makes determinations regarding whether a proposal should be approved or declined. Each application cycle consists of the following elements:

**Application Receipt and Review for Completeness:** St. Thomas receives an application and staff conduct a review for completion and compliance with application guidelines. Applications which clearly do not meet requirements (ie: are missing sections, do not adhere to application guidelines, etc.) are not reviewed and are returned to the school for amendment.

**Follow-Up Interviews, Request for Additional Information and/or Site Visit.** St. Thomas staff or the Charter Accountability Board may choose to ask for additional materials, conduct follow-up interviews, and/or make a site visit to further gather information.

**Application Evaluation:** St. Thomas will use information provided in the application, annual and quarterly reports and annual evaluations, as well as information gained from the site visit to review the proposal and complete the evaluation rubric included with the application process.

**Staff Recommendation and Decision Process:** Program staff gather all data collected in the process of reviewing a school's application and completing the rubric. If the data support a recommendation to change the school location, a recommendation is made by the Director of Charter School Authorizing to the Charter Accountability Board/Dean to approve the application. Upon approval of the application, the recommendation is then forwarded to the University's President, who makes the final decision and executes all contracts for authorization between the University and the school.

**Supplemental Affidavit:** If the application is approved, St. Thomas will then begin crafting a change of location request to be submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education.

## Evaluation Rubric

As noted in the Review Process section above, St. Thomas CAB and staff will use the attached scoring rubric to determine whether the application meets standards and provides a compelling case for the charter school change of location. It is important to note that in order to be approved all sections of the application must demonstrate that the applicant is prepared to meet the standard.

## Charter School Change of Location Application Evaluation Rubric

**Instructions for Application Reviewers**

Please review the following criteria to rate applicant responses to the Request for Proposals. Within each section, specific criteria define the expectations for a strong response that "Meets the Standard."

| Rating | Characteristic |
|---|---|
| 4 = Exceeds Standard | Meets and goes beyond required criteria. Provides clear and comprehensive information on the section presented, including a level of detail that demonstrates an understanding of key issues and strongly suggests that the change of location will be successful. Where applicable, outside sources of information are cited and used to bolster the information shared. All elements of the application are addressed thoroughly. |
| 3 = Meets Standard | Meets all required criteria, is clear, reasonably comprehensive, and demonstrates a solid grasp of key issues. Any weaknesses are unlikely to impact the successful relocation of the charter school. |
| 2 = Partially Meets Standard | Addresses most, but not all, required criteria and may be missing important information or have weaknesses that could adversely impact the success of the school changing location. |
| 1 = Does Not Meet Standard | Meets some or none of the required criteria. Important information is missing, lack of preparation is evident, and/or the application has weaknesses that would adversely impact the success of the school changing location. |

In each section, mark the number 1-4 indicating your impression of the applicant's response. Provide brief comments to support your ratings in the right-hand column, citing page numbers from the application as appropriate to support your comments.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Name of Applicant:**<br>**Name of School(s):**<br>**Name of Reviewer:**<br>**Date:** | |

| APPLICATION NARRATIVE | RATING & COMMENTS<br>(Cite application page numbers as appropriate) |
|---|---|
| **I. Executive Summary** | |
| Provides an overview of the proposed change in location including impacts on enrollment, faculty and facilities. Include an explanation of how the change in location forwards the school's mission and a brief rationale for such change in location at this time.<br><br>_Strong responses_ will include all required elements and be no more than two pages long. | *1      2      3      4* |
| **II. Demonstration of Need and Projected Enrollment** | |

| A. Need & Demand (Projected Enrollment) Presents a compelling reason for the change in school location including a description and evidence of need which include: | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**A. Need & Demand (Projected Enrollment)**

Presents a compelling reason for the change in school location including a description and evidence of need which include:

- Current and projected demographic information;
- Student enrollment patterns;
- Information on existing schools and types of educational programs currently available
- Characteristics of proposed students and families
- Availability of properly zoned and classified facilities; and
- Quantification of existing demand for the school or site.

*Strong responses will be thoughtful, comprehensive, and clear in answering questions such as: What value will the change in location add to the school as a whole? How will this location enhance student learning? and Why is this change in location necessary at this time?*

| **III. Current School Academic and Other Performance Areas** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Provides information about the school's current level of effectiveness.

| **A. Academic Performance** | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**A. Academic Performance**

Provides evidence of student academic achievement using longitudinal data from statewide assessments under chapter 120B (ie: MCA Proficiency Results.) as well as school-selected assessments. Please note that for data to be considered 'longitudinal' it must involve at least three years of results. A supporting narrative should accompany all data.

*Strong responses will include a multi-year analysis of MCA data, which demonstrates positive student performance and growth over time. If applicable, additional data may be included to further demonstrate improved performance and growth. A strong supporting narrative should accompany the data in this section, highlighting how the school is fulfilling its primary purpose "to improve all pupil learning and all student achievement" and explaining any areas of low performance or growth along with the school's plans to address these issues.*

| **B. Faculty** | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**B. Faculty**

Provide evidence that current teachers are appropriately licensed or have received appropriate waivers from the Minnesota Board of Teaching.

| **IV. Legal and Fiscal Performance** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Provides evidence that the school is fiscally sound and has the financial capacity to implement the program within the bounds of state/federal funding restrictions.

| **A. Current Financial Position** | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**A. Current Financial Position**

Includes a brief overview of the school's current position, including the following: fund balance history, budgeting history, and cash flow projections. Applicants need not provide in-depth information on items already available to St. Thomas through quarterly reports, etc.

*Strong responses will highlight evidence of alignment with the performance standards and the financial outcomes in the school's contract with the authorizer.*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **B. Reporting**<br>Identifies the extent to which the school met all compliance reporting deadlines. | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |
| **C. Audit Findings**<br>Includes a discussion of any current/unsatisfied audit findings and the school's approved corrective action plan. If the school has no findings, it need not include this section. | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |
| **D. Facilities**<br>Provides a description of how the change of location will affect the school's overall facilities plan and whether an additional site or build-out of the new location will be needed. If applicable, the school identifies the potential location(s). Description of how the change of location will impact the school's transportation, food service and other services. Description of how the school will continue to comply with health and safety regulations. | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |
| **E. Faculty**<br>Describes how the change of location will affect staffing needs, including the need to hire additional teachers, managers, and support staff. ***Include brief job descriptions for each staffing change. Attach a copy of the current faculty organizational chart and the proposed organizational chart that reflects the change in school location.*** The proposed organizational chart should include teacher names and assignments for existing faculty and the position titles and assignments for new faculty (i.e. Teacher – Social Studies). | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |
| **F. Budget and Cash Flow Projections**<br>Includes two sets of budget and cash flow projections are included, one showing the school as its current location, and another including the school as proposed at the new location. Each set of budget and cash flow projections extend a minimum of four fiscal years into the future (five years total, including current year). Budgets reflect full fiscal years and include line items, subtotaled by category.<br><br>The narrative contains detailed description of the budgetary changes that result from the location change. Includes letters of support/other forms of documentation for any outside funds the school has included in its budget. References budget development assumptions in the narrative as appropriate.<br><br>*Strong responses will make clear that the school has a realistic plan in place for funding the change in location without harming current programs.*<br><br>*Strong responses will answer any questions about whether any facilities beyond the school's new location will be necessary, and an analysis of the facility options considered and their cost.* | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |
| **V. Governance and Management Performance** | | | | |
| Provides evidence that the school has the governance and management capacity to implement the change in school location | | | | |
| **A. Board Capacity** | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Describe the extent to which the school has a successfully functioning Board including, but not limited to, 1) adequacy of membership by skill sets, 2) fulfillment of training requirements and 3) the extent of member involvement in Board and committee meetings. ***Attach a copy of the current School Board roster*** which includes member names and positions on the Board. | | | | |
| **B. Management Capacity**<br>Includes a description of how the proposed change of location will be staffed and overseen, including discussion of any additional positions that will be created, restructured or eliminated. | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |
| **VI. Key Components of Proposed Change of Location** | | | | |
| **A. Change of Location Overview and Philosophy**<br>Describes the change of location and its alignment with and benefit to the school. Articulates any areas in which the change of location will require a different approach or philosophy from the existing school . | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |
| **B. Communication Strategies**<br><br>Describes how the school has communicated the potential change of the school's location to stakeholder groups. Describes communication plan for both internal and external stakeholders if approval is granted. | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |

**As noted in the application, the St. Thomas Charter Accountability Board and program staff will use applicable sections of the school's annual report and other available information to determine the likelihood of a successful charter school change of location.**

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Do I have to follow the order of the application questions exactly?**
Yes. The St. Thomas application is arranged to facilitate our understanding of the school relocation being proposed, as well as allow for efficient review. Applications which do not follow the required format, contain incomplete information, or are missing attachments may be disqualified and removed from the review process. St. Thomas reserves the right to reject any applications that are incomplete or substantially diverge from application specifications prior to internal/external expert review. Additionally, all applicants are encouraged to review the Evaluation Rubric prior to submitting their application in order to ensure that responses address all criteria.

**Where can I learn more about St. Thomas and its authorizing philosophy?**
The best place to learn about St. Thomas's Authorizing Program is its webpage. We particularly encourage prospective applicants to read the 'about the St. Thomas Authorizing Program' section, our Authorizing Program Policy Manual, and profiles of the schools currently in our network. Time allowing, we are also happy to meet with applicant groups in person to discuss the application process and our authorizing philosophy.

Link to our webpage: https://education.stthomas.edu/about/impact/charter-school-authorizing/

**How can I ask questions and provide feedback to St. Thomas?**
Please direct any questions regarding application submission, process, timeline, or content to tmoffatt@stthomas.edu. In addition, we are always looking to improve our processes and invite

comments and suggestions from applicants.  If there are additional questions you believe would have assisted your organization in showcasing its proposal, or language you believe could have been clarified, please send your suggestions—as well as a citation for the part of the application to which your comment pertains—to tmoffatt@stthomas.edu.

# XII. CHANGE OF LOCATION READY-TO-OPEN PROCESS

The University of St. Thomas (St. Thomas) is dedicated to working with approved charter schools within our network to ensure realization of the high quality, successful school change of location. The year leading up to the launch of a location change is a critical time in which the school is laying the foundation for future performance. As such, St. Thomas has developed a series of benchmarks and required actions to ensure key pieces of the relocation are in place prior to implementation. These items are aligned with St. Thomas' academic, financial and organization performance framework.

St. Thomas is committed to working with school leadership and Boards throughout the planning year to ensure that all Change of Location Ready-to-Open (RTO) benchmarks are met and the school is prepared to implement the relocation successfully.

The Change of Location RTO timeline, process and benchmarks are detailed below.

## Timeline

Please note that the timelines included are intended to provide an idea of the general process and may vary from one cycle to the next. Updated timelines are available by contacting the Director of Charter School Authorizing, or by checking the St. Thomas Charter Authorizing Program website. Should the school be required to relocate during the academic year due to non-renewal of its lease or in an event of an emergency that makes the facility unsafe, the timeline described below is subject to modification.

| Date | Action |
|---|---|
| August | Notification of School Change of Location Approval |
| October 1 | Submittal of Affidavit to MDE |
| Monthly | Ongoing monitoring of progress towards RTO checklist by St. Thomas staff through meetings (in-person and/or via phone) by St. Thomas staff. |
| 1 Week Prior to RTO Meeting | All information and supporting documentation sent to St. Thomas verifying attainment of benchmarks. |
| No later than 6-8 Weeks Prior to First Day of Operations | **School Change of Location Ready-to-Open Meeting** |
| Within 2 Weeks of Change of Location RTO Meeting | Final Determination of Change of Location RTO issued |

## Change of Location Ready-to-Open Benchmarks

The Change of Location RTO benchmarks consist of six areas of critical importance, which are aligned with the detailed checklist used during the start-up period. In order to open, the school must demonstrate its satisfaction of each area. A summary of the areas is provided below (see the Change of Location Ready-to-Open Benchmark Requirement Detail, which follows, for a full description of each item and required documentation):

**Enrollment** in the new school location is sufficient to allow for financial viability and programmatic integrity.

- Confirmed enrollment is at or above the minimum number acceptable per the school's contingency budget for lowest possible operating enrollment.

**Board governance** is competent, compliant with law and prepared to oversee the change in school location

- Necessary Board policies, procedures, and bylaws are in place and approved by the Board.
- Appropriate insurance is in place.
- If partnering with an external organization, Memorandum of Understanding that clearly articulates the roles and responsibilities of both parties has been executed.
- A plan for academic oversight by the Board has been developed.
- Relocation updates and any necessary approvals have regularly been a part of Board meetings
- Board members understand the financial implications of the change of school location if successful/unsuccessful

**Financial Management and Oversight** is adequate to ensure the fiscal health of the school.

- A contingency budget for the lowest operating enrollment has been developed.
- Updated transportation plan to include the change in location (the school has secured bussing either through the resident district or an alternative vendor)
- Updated food services plan for the new location

**Appropriate facility** has been acquired and the lease signed.

- St. Thomas has received a copy of the lease, received the opportunity to review and comment as specified by contract, and has no significant concerns.
- Should the new location include a facility project, St. Thomas is a provided with a copy of the Certificate of Occupancy and has been kept informed of relevant developments in terms of the cost and progress of the project.
- Facility is safe (e.g. all building inspections have been satisfactorily completed), suitable to receive students and adequate for the program model.

**Learning program** elements are in place for meeting the mission of the school.

- All necessary materials (e.g. books, manipulatives, etc.) have been purchased and will be on-site prior to opening.
- Classroom environments are suitable for the mission-specific learning program.
- Student/family handbook has been updated to align with the new location

**Key staff** and the majority of teachers have been hired.

- The School Leader or leadership has been hired, if applicable.
- At least 75% of staff members have been hired.
- A plan is in place to hire any remaining staff well before the start of the year
- Should any key personnel leave their role prior to the Change of Location Ready-to-Open determination, the school will provide verification that the position has been filled by someone with similar experience and record of performance.

## Process

A charter school's ability to successfully fulfill the three primary components of its contractual agreement with St. Thomas – academic success, fiscal viability, and organizational aptitude –while a change in location depends a great deal on what happens well before the relocation is implemented. To support School Leaders and Boards through the process, St. Thomas created a Change of School Location Ready-to-Open Checklist that identifies key activities. The tool also provides a relatively simple vehicle for St. Thomas oversight of relocation activities. Progress and completion of Change of School Location Ready-to-Open Checklist items will be reviewed regularly through the Pre-Relocation Oversight process outlined below and culminate with a Change of School Location Ready-to-Open meeting and the final decision regarding readiness to implement.

### Pre-Change of School Location Oversight

Progress and completion of Change in School Location Ready-to-Open Checklist items will be monitored through the following:

> ***School Leader Report***. The School Leader should maintain a master copy of the Change of School Location Ready-to-Open Checklist and send an up-to-date copy to St. Thomas prior to each monthly meeting.
> ***Monthly Meetings with St. Thomas Staff***. School Leaders are required to have monthly check-in meeting with St. Thomas staff to review progress towards benchmarks and ensure the school is on-track.
> ***Charter School Board Meetings***. School Boards are expected to review the Change of School Location Ready-to-Open Checklist items at all Board meetings and should be included in the School Leader or Board Chair report at every Board meeting whether the authorizer is present or not.

### Change of School Location Ready-to-Open Meeting

A school's relocation planning period culminates in a Change of School Location RTO meeting which ensures that all benchmarks have been met and the school is prepared to implement the relocation successfully. In the event that the school is unable to satisfy the Change of School Location RTO benchmarks, the opening of the new location may be delayed until the Change of School Location RTO benchmarks are met. The delay in opening will be based on circumstances and progress towards relocation.

Change of School Location RTO meetings are required to be structured as follows:

> ***Attendees***. The following persons must attend the Change of School Location RTO meeting:
> Board chair
> Leadership Team (e.g. School Leader, Principal, Operations Manager)
> St. Thomas representatives

> Additional Board members are welcome to attend; however, please be aware of Open Meeting Law requirements with respect to quorum.

*Location and Format.* The Change of School Location RTO meeting will be held at the school site and will commence with a brief tour of the new school facility (if possible/applicable) followed by an opportunity for the school to demonstrate how each benchmark has been satisfied. The final portion of the meeting will be reserved for discussion of the school's progress. A Change of School Location RTO meeting will typically take 1.5-2 hours but may require additional time if the school is facing numerous or complex issues.

**Final Decision**

St. Thomas will issue a Final Determination of Readiness to Change of School Location within two weeks of the Change of School Location RTO meeting. Schools unable to satisfy all criteria after this period will be allowed to open no sooner than the satisfaction of Change of School Location RTO benchmarks are met.

# Change of Location - Ready to Open Benchmark Requirement Detail

| Benchmark | Criteria | Documentation | Submission Timeline |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1) Enrollment** is sufficient to allow for financial viability and programmatic integrity. | Enrollment is at or above the minimum number acceptable per the school's contingency budget for lowest possible operating enrollment <mark>(See pre-September checklist).</mark> | • Current Budget being considered by the Board for the upcoming school year.<br>• Contingency Budget<br>• Current enrollment figures (based on families who have completely filled out enrollment forms—those who have indicated interest but have not formally enrolled may not be counted). | File with St. Thomas at least one week prior to RTO meeting. Paper copies of filled-out enrollment forms or an opportunity to review completed enrollment forms electronically will be necessary. Directory information for families may be requested if enrollment is close to minimum budget.<br><br>Bring copies of most updated figures to RTO meeting if changes have occurred. |
| **2) Board governance** is competent, compliant with law and prepared to oversee the change of location. | • Necessary Board policies, procedures, and bylaws are in place and approved by the Board.<br>• Appropriate insurance is in place.<br>• If partnering with an external organization, signed Memorandum of Understanding that clearly articulates the roles and responsibilities of both parties.<br>• A plan for academic and enrollment oversight by the Board has been developed.<br>• Relocation updates and any necessary approvals have regularly been a part of Board meetings<br>• Board members understand the financial implications of the relocation if successful/unsuccessful | • Board policy handbook (documentation of policies added/revised due to the change of location)<br>• Current bylaws, note any changes made if bylaws have been updated.<br>• Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)<br>• Academic oversight plan<br>• Board meeting agendas and minutes | At least one week prior to RTO meeting. |
| **3) Financial Management and Oversight** is adequate to ensure the fiscal health of the school. | • A contingency budget for the lowest operating enrollment has been developed.<br>• Updated transportation plan for new location (the school has secured bussing either through the resident district or an alternative vendor)<br>• Updated food services plan for new location | • Copy of contingency budget.<br>• Signed contract with vendor or resident school district agreement verification. | At least one week prior to RTO meeting. |
| **4) Appropriate Facility** acquired/Lease signed | • St. Thomas has received a copy of the lease, received the opportunity to review and comment as specified by contract, and has no significant concerns. | • Signed Lease<br>• Certificate of Occupancy | At least one week prior to RTO meeting if changes were made to the lease St. Thomas reviewed and commented on. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | • Should the new location include a facility project, St. Thomas is a provided with a copy of the Certificate of Occupancy and has been kept informed of relevant developments in terms of the cost and progress of the project.<br>• Facility is safe (e.g. all building inspections have been satisfactorily completed), suitable to receive students and adequate for the program model. | • St. Thomas observation of site and discussion of improvements completed and underway<br>• Board meeting minutes | |
| **5) Learning program** elements are in place for meeting the mission of the school. | • All necessary materials (e.g. books, manipulatives, etc.) have been purchased and will be on-site prior to opening.<br>• Classroom environments are suitable for the mission-specific learning program. | • Purchasing plan<br>• Map of facility with classrooms identified | At least one week prior to RTO meeting. |
| **6) Key staff** and majority of teachers have been hired. | • The School Leader or leadership has been hired, if applicable.<br>• At least 75% of staff members have been hired<br>• A plan is in place to hire any remaining staff well before the start of the year<br>• Should any key personnel leave their role prior to the Change of School Location Ready-to-Open determination, the school will provide verification that the position has been filled by someone with similar experience and record of performance. | • Complete change in school location teacher licensure verification form attached as Appendix A<br>• Include an all-staff listing with titles and positions remaining vacant | At least one week prior to RTO meeting. (reference June checklist) |

**Appendix A**
Change of School Location Teacher Licensure Verification

| Teacher Name | File Folder # | Subject or Specialty | Courses Taught | Grade(s) Taught | License Details |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sally Sample | 426777 | Math | Algebra I, Geometry | 6-7 | El-Ed K-6 and Math 5-8 (expires 6/30/2015) |
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## Chang in Location Ready to Open Checklist & Monthly Meeting Guide

| Benchmarks | Person/s Responsible | Status/Date | Summary of Progress |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1) Enrollment** | | | |
| Enrollment is at or above the minimum number acceptable per the school's contingency budget for lowest possible operating enrollment (See pre-September checklist). | | | |
| **2) Board Governance** | | | |
| Necessary Board policies, procedures, and bylaws are in place and approved by the Board. | | | |
| Appropriate insurance is in place. | | | |
| If partnering with an external organization, signed Memorandum of Understanding that clearly articulates the roles and responsibilities of both parties. | | | |
| A plan for academic oversight by the Board has been developed. | | | |
| Relocation updates and any necessary approvals have regularly been a part of Board meetings | | | |
| Board members understand the financial implications of the relocation if successful/unsuccessful. | | | |
| **3) Financial Management and Oversight** | | | |
| A contingency budget for the lowest operating enrollment has been developed. | | | |
| Updated transportation plan to include the change of school location (the school has secured bussing either through the resident district or an alternative vendor) | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Updated food services plan for the new location | | | |
| **4) Appropriate Facility** | | | |
| St. Thomas has received a copy of the lease, received the opportunity to review and comment as specified by contract, and has no significant concerns. | | | |
| Should the new location include a facility project, St. Thomas is a provided with a copy of the Certificate of Occupancy and has been kept informed of relevant developments in terms of the cost and progress of the project. | | | |
| Facility is safe (e.g. all building inspections have been satisfactorily completed), suitable to receive students and adequate for the program model. | | | |
| **5) Learning Program** | | | |
| All necessary materials (e.g. books, manipulatives, etc.) have been purchased and will be on-site prior to opening. | | | |
| Classroom environments are suitable for the mission-specific learning program. | | | |
| **6) Key Staff** | | | |
| The School Leader or leadership has been hired, if applicable. | | | |
| At least 75% of staff members have been hired | | | |
| A plan is in place to hire any remaining staff well before the start of the year | | | |
| Should any key personnel leave their role prior to the Change of School Location Ready-to-Open determination, the school will provide verification that the position has been filled by someone with similar experience and record of performance. | | | |

# XIII. ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

The University of St. Thomas (St. Thomas) is committed to fulfilling its role as a charter school authorizer by holding its schools accountable for a range of results. Through clear reporting by the schools and oversight by the authorizer, St. Thomas will uphold our legal obligation to make sure the schools we authorize are reaching (or making adequate progress toward) the purposes, goals, and benchmarks outlined in their charter contract and Minnesota statute. This collective body of evidence will also form the basis for contract renewal decisions. In keeping with the primary purpose of charter schools under MN Statutes §124E.01, Subd. 1, improving all pupil learning and all student achievement as measured by the Academic Performance indicators will be the most important factor in determining contract renewal. The School's success in meeting the additional statutory purposes identified by the School will be considered as secondary factors.

St. Thomas uses a standard charter contract with unique, school-specific terms that capture different approaches to achieving student success. The individuality of each school will be preserved in the Accountability System and self-reporting on the results of its respective outcomes through the Annual Report and additional reports as described in the Oversight System section. Failure to provide adequate information to allow the goals to be scored will result in a score of 1, does not meet standard.

Authorizer reporting on school outcomes will take place annually and will be in alignment with the goals set forth through the Accountability System. St. Thomas will report findings to the School's Leader and Board and encourage constructive dialogue on continuous improvement efforts.

The Accountability System is presented below and is composed of two sections, the Evaluation Framework and the Evaluation Rubric.

## Evaluation Framework

The Evaluation Framework sets forth the <u>indicators</u> (general categories) of performance which include academic performance, financial viability, Board governance, operations, and legal compliance. The Evaluation Framework also provides the general <u>measures</u> (means to evaluate an indicator), including contextual and methodological information where appropriate. The Evaluation Framework is used in conjunction with the Evaluation Rubric.

## Evaluation Rubric

The Evaluation Rubric sets forth the <u>metrics</u> (means to quantify a measure) and <u>targets</u> (specific performance thresholds for success in meeting the standard) for determining whether a school has met its performance requirements according to the expectations set forth in the Evaluation Framework. Each metric in the evaluation rubric has performance targets rated on a four-point scale, compliance indicators cannot exceed standard:

      4 = Exceeds standard
      3 = Meets standard
      2 = Approaching standard

1 = Does not meet standard

The St. Thomas (UST) Accountability System, including the Evaluation Framework and Evaluation Rubric will be used whenever formal decisions are made about the effectiveness of a charter school in meeting its stated mission and objectives as well as the expectations set forth in its contract. The Accountability System will be used by Authorizing Program staff and by the St. Thomas Charter School Authorizing Board to assess authorized schools' suitability for Contract Renewal and to evaluate any charter school seeking Change of Authorizer Status.

The University of St. Thomas regards schools that are meeting expectations (a score of 3 or above) to be performing well against the standards. In order to be considered for a full-term contract renewal (5 years), schools must achieve average scores of 2.5 or greater in all three areas and meet the additional specifications laid out in the contract renewal rubric. In order to be considered for expansion without submission of additional compelling data, schools must have scored an average of 3.0 or greater on Academic Performance indicators over the past three years while demonstrating strength across both qualitative and quantitative indicators.

St. Thomas expects each of its authorized charter schools to use academic and non-academic performance metrics that are SMART:

> [S]pecific
> [M]easurable
> [A]ttainable
> [R]elevant, and
> [T]ime-bound

The St. Thomas Accountability System includes evaluation of school-specific metrics, as well as an evaluation of the general metrics that St. Thomas has for each of its authorized charter schools.

Each St. Thomas-authorized charter school will provide the information necessary to score Accountability System metrics, if not reported elsewhere, in the Annual Report. Based on the reported results, as well as its site visits, review of publicly available data, and regular contact with the school, St. Thomas will annually assess the school's performance regarding academic success, fiscal viability, and organizational effectiveness using the Evaluation Rubric that follows. The four-point rating system used in the rubric allows St. Thomas to summarize each school's level of achievement and their progress toward meeting the outcomes delineated in the Evaluation Framework.

***Please note that the Accountability System below represents a template that will be modified during contract negotiation to enable St. Thomas to appropriately evaluate each of its authorized schools.***

## Evaluation Framework

### Indicators
The University of St. Thomas Evaluation Framework seeks to set forth the indicators and measures that capture school performance. Indicators are general categories of performance and include academic performance, financial viability, and organizational effectiveness, which encompasses

Board governance, operations, and legal compliance. These indicators seek to answer specific questions and are grouped as follows:

| Indicator(s) | Question | Rubric Section |
|---|---|---|
| Academic Performance | Is the learning program a success? | 1 |
| Financial Viability | Does the school exhibit strong fiscal health? | 2 |
| Organizational Effectiveness: -Board Governance -Operations -Legal Compliance | Is the organization effective and well-run? | 3 |

## Measures

Measures are the means to evaluate an indicator, not the specific goals (metrics and targets) which are found in the evaluation rubric. The information below also includes contextual and methodological information where such information is not found in the specific rubric.

## Section 1: Academic Performance - Is the learning program a success?

The intent of the Academic Performance section is to provide a multi-faceted understanding of Student academic performance at the charter school. Many measures are aligned to the state's World's Best Workforce Priorities. The measures used to understand academic performance include:

- Preschool/Prekindergarten student school readiness
- Students reading well by 3rd Grade
- Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) Data: All authorized schools shall participate fully in the MCAs;
- At least one additional school-selected standardized assessment which must be approved by the authorizer in advance of the evaluation rubric's finalization and be utilized for a minimum of three years before a change in assessment can be requested;
- At least one mission-specific academic goal;
- Program alignment with chartered mission and vision;
- Graduation rate data; and
- College and career readiness data.

Data from these assessments will be compiled and evaluated as described below. Each area may have multiple metrics for success as reflected by the Evaluation Rubric included in the contract.

**Methodology for Selection of Comparison Schools or Virtual Comparison School**
Several academic performance indicators involve the use of demographically similar comparison schools or a virtual demographically matched comparison group. In an effort to be as clear and transparent as possible, the methodology for the selection of comparison schools is addressed below. The process for creating virtual comparison groups is run by the Minnesota Department of Education and is also provided below. Relevant measures will specify whether a virtual comparison group or demographic comparison schools are used; however, if under any circumstances the MN Department of Education ceases to produce or is unable to provide virtual comparison group data in the same or a similar manner, regular comparison schools will be used throughout all relevant measures.

*Identification of Demographic Comparison Schools*

1. Data files containing student demographic information are downloaded from the Minnesota Department of Education website.
2. Data is filtered in the following order:
    a. Schools in the seven-county metro area—to approximate the area in which the authorized school is located;
    b. Schools within 5% of the authorized school's percentage of students qualifying for free/reduced price lunch —to approximate poverty levels;
    c. Schools within 5% of the authorized school's percentage of students receiving English Learner services; and
    d. Schools within 5% of the authorized school's percentage of students receiving special education services.
3. Schools of differing types than the authorized school are removed—to ensure relevance. For example, to the extent possible, elementary schools are matched with other elementary schools; non-ALC high schools are matched with other non-ALC high schools, etc. Matches do not seek to match the specific school model, type, or philosophy, as our expectation is that students can succeed in many school models and that any model selected should meet the needs of students.

The goal of the process described above is to generate 3-5 schools serving a similar population with which the authorized school can be compared. It is important to note that at times, the process above will produce too many or too few matches. In that case, the parameters of items b, c, and d above may be adjusted to find an adequate number of the best possible matches. Due to shifting demographics in schools, matches may vary from year to year.

Matches will be shared with schools for comment prior to construction of final data sheets, and schools may request the inclusion of additional schools or present a rationale for excluding a certain school; however, the authorizer may or may not grant such requests based on its discretion. All resident district schools serving relevant grades will be included in the 'resident district' column.

While every school is different and demographic matching will not create exact apples-to-apples comparisons, St. Thomas's desire is to arrive at a group of comparison schools that are relevant, fair, and allow for insight into the authorized school's performance.

***Description of Virtual Comparison School Process Executed by the Minnesota Department of Education***

To assess the relative performance of an individual charter LEA, for each student within a given charter, a student with similar characteristics (currently defined as matching in grade, gender, race/ethnicity, special education status, English learner status, and free and reduced-price meal eligibility) will be randomly drawn from a pool consisting of all Minnesota public school students not enrolled in the charter for which the comparison group is being created. Collectively, this comparison group can be thought of as a "virtual school" in the sense that it will include the same number of students, in the same grades, with the same demographic

characteristics as the actual charter LEA to which it is being compared, thus more closely matching the student composition, and expected student performance, of the Charter than any one actual Minnesota school to which that Charter might be compared.

A unique virtual school will be created separately for each charter LEA. The performance of the students in this virtual school will then be calculated. To account for the possibility that a single iteration, or "run," of this process may produce an atypical comparison group for a given charter LEA, the procedure will be repeated multiple times for each charter LEA, and the performance of the comparison virtual schools over those multiple runs will be averaged on each of the six High Quality Charter School measures. This virtual school creation process is repeated for each year of data included in the analysis.

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**Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment Measures**
The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) Measures data includes the current MCA assessment as well as all equivalent state standardized tests.

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Students in tested grades who are eligible to take the MCA (i.e.: all students not exempted based on an IEP) will illustrate their progress through the MCA goal series. These goals ensure that students are making progress toward or maintaining high levels of proficiency on the state's academic standards as evidenced through the state's MCA exam. These goals will be scored based on school-wide results.

**MCA Proficiency Reading Well By Third Grade**
Third grade students should be proficient in reading as demonstrated on the third grade MCA test.

**MCA Proficiency**
St. Thomas authorized charter schools should perform as well as or better than the state, the district where the school resides, and a virtual comparison group or identified schools with comparable demographics (methodology for selection of comparison schools and information on virtual comparison groups is described above).

**MCA Proficiency for Students in Various Demographic Groups**
Students qualifying for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (FRL), English Learner services, Special Education services, and in all racial/ethnic demographic groups at St. Thomas authorized charter schools should perform as well as or better than their demographic counterparts statewide.

**MCA Progress**
MCA data will be analyzed to determine whether students are maintaining or moving toward proficiency. Students should be maintaining at a proficient level from one year to the next or should be increasing their proficiency level.

**MCA Progress Comparison Using Minnesota North Star System**
Students in authorized schools should progress at the same or better rate as the state, resident district, and their comparable schools/virtual comparison group.

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**School Selected Standardized Assessment(s) Measures**
In addition to state tests, all schools must select one or more standardized assessments that allow St. Thomas to better understand student attainment and growth.

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All St. Thomas -authorized charter schools serving one or more relevant grades (3-11) who are eligible (i.e.: all students not exempt from standardized testing based on their IEP) must participate in additional standardized assessment testing administered in [INSERT ADMINSTRATION

TIMEFRAME] (e.g. fall and spring of each year, fall of each year, or spring of each year). These measures provide another way to analyze the school's academic progress.

The school's selected assessment(s) must allow the authorizer to examine student performance to a target level as well as assess gains over time as set forth in the school's Evaluation Rubric metrics and targets.

If a school has more than 10 students tested in each grade level, then it should report on these goals for each grade and for the entire school. If there are fewer than 10 students in any grade, then the school should report on this goal for the entire school, only. Scoring for this goal will be on a school-wide level.

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**Mission Specific Academic and Alignment Measures**

**Mission Specific Academic Goal**
Based on the school's mission, each school must propose at least one school-specific academic goal (including metric and targets) to be considered and approved by St. Thomas. The goal should reflect the school's unique mission/vision and must be measurable. The school is responsible for providing the data necessary to measure progress on this goal. Failure to provide adequate information to allow the goal to be scored will result in a score of 1, does not meet standard.

**Academic Program Alignment to Mission and Vision**
UST expects the learning programs of authorized schools to exemplify the mission and vision set forth in the school's application for authorization and will assess alignment accordingly.

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**Other Academic Measures**

**Graduation Rate**
Schools serving grades 9-12 must demonstrate their ability to move students to graduation as defined in the Evaluation Rubric.

**College Readiness**
Schools serving grades 9-12 must have at least one assessment and resulting goal (metric and target) addressing college and career readiness as defined in the Evaluation Rubric.

## Section 2: Financial Viability - Does the school exhibit strong fiscal health?

The parties acknowledge that the Minnesota Charter School Law (124E) requires a charter school to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management. This includes meeting all St. Thomas, MDE, and statutory reporting deadlines, and remaining current on all financial obligations, including, but not limited to: pension payments, payroll taxes, insurance coverage, loan payments and terms. The intent of the Financial Viability section is to ensure the successful operation of the school into the future and to ensure the proper use of public funds.

Keeping in mind that measures are the means to evaluate an indicator (financial viability), not the specific goals (metrics and targets) which are found in the evaluation rubric, the measures used to understand financial performance include:

- Structures promoting strong Board oversight including appropriate policies (i.e.: fund balance policy) and practices (i.e.: finance committee) that promote financial health;
- Annual audit performed and submitted in accordance with MN law;
- Annual budget and monthly cash flow projection by June 30th of each fiscal year; and
- Performance on key financial metrics that demonstrate the school's financial position.
- School ability to meet bond covenants

Data from these sources will be compiled and evaluated. Each measure may have multiple metrics for success as reflected by the Evaluation Rubric.

**Annual Audit**
All authorized schools must receive an audit annually in accordance with MN law. St. Thomas expects that audits are clean with no major findings (i.e. "clean" opinion, no material weaknesses on internal controls, and no findings on compliance with state or federal laws). An audit finding shall be considered Minor unless St. Thomas determines a finding is Major. If St. Thomas believes an audit finding may be Major, it shall obtain an opinion from a qualified, third-party professional regarding the importance of the finding. St. Thomas shall also ask the charter school to respond to the finding. In general, a finding will be considered Major if it indicates a deliberate act of wrongdoing, reckless conduct or causes a loss of confidence in the abilities or integrity of the school or seriously jeopardizes the continued operation of the school. Classification of a finding as Major shall be at the sole discretion of St. Thomas and would result in the school being placed on intervention.

## Section 3: Organizational Effectiveness (Board Governance, Operations, and Legal Compliance) – Is the organization effective and well run?

A successful charter school requires a Board and leadership team with competency in a variety of governance, operational, and compliance-related areas. The Organizational Effectiveness indicator seeks to capture a school's performance through a variety of qualitative and quantitative measures. The intent of the Organizational Effectiveness section is to ensure that schools are following all St. Thomas, MDE, and statutory compliance requirements, providing academic programs that meet state and federal requirements, properly governing schools, and utilizing certain accepted best practices all in service of providing students with a safe, stable, and effective school.

As noted above measures are the means to evaluate an indicator, not the specific goals (metrics and targets). The measures used to understand organizational effectiveness include:
- Systems to properly maintain policies and bylaws.
- Compliance with bylaws and policies.
- Demonstrated commitment of all members to continuous learning, and nonprofit best practices including:
  a. Ability to understand and abide by appropriate Board and School Leader roles (i.e.: governance vs. management).
  b. Annual leader review (see above), including a formal, documented review process, timelines, and criteria. Completed by March of each year.
  c. Annual Board self-review March of each year.
  d. Annual evaluation of any Educational Service Providers, if applicable.

e. Utilizing an effective recruitment and orientation process for new members, which at a minimum includes background on issues presently facing the Board and an introduction to key documents (i.e.: policy manual, Board bylaws, contract with authorizer).

f. Engaging in strategic planning at least once every five years, or more frequently if significant programmatic or other changes are slated to occur, and utilizing the strategic plan to drive the direction and priorities of the school.

- The Board of Directors will regularly review, update, and approve its bylaws and policies such that they maintain compliance with state law and current best practices.
- Distribution of a complete packet (as described in Evaluation Rubric) at least three days prior to all Board meetings.
- Maintenance of orderly records at all times by the Board of Directors, which includes meeting minutes, Board documents (bylaws, articles of incorporation, policies, etc.), and financial statements. Records will meet the requirements of the Open Meeting Law, will be kept on site, and will be made available to the public in accordance with Open Meeting Law.
- Levels of parent, teacher and student satisfaction as measured by student and teacher retention, and an annual parent satisfaction survey which requests satisfaction with the school overall as one item. Teachers who are retiring or who are no longer qualified to serve in their previous role are not counted against the school's teacher retention goal. Teachers who have left the classroom but are retained by the school in an alternate position (i.e.: Teachers on Special Assignment) are also not counted against the school's retention goal.
- Demonstrated commitment to continuous learning by school leadership, teachers and staff.
- Engagements of families in students' education.
- Provision of a safe, welcoming and equitable learning environment.
- Student attendance rates.
- Fulfillment of legal obligations regarding students who qualify for special education services as indicated by conditions such as the following:
  a. Clear understanding of current legislation, research and effective practices relating to the provision of special education services by appropriate staff.
  b. Access to appropriate training and information for all staff.
  c. Effective and timely implementation of individual education plans, informed by the appropriately documented needs of individual students.
  d. Well-managed relationships with students, parents, and external providers that comply with law and regulation.
  e. School-specific and Board-approved TSES manual.
  f. Retention of appropriate staff (including teachers, a qualified special education director, and contracted service providers) as required by student population.
  g. No adverse findings in complaints database.
  h. Results from most recent MDE program and financial audits.
- Fulfillment of legal obligations regarding students identified for English Learner (EL) services as indicated by conditions such as the following.
  a. Clear understanding of current legislation, research and effective practices relating to the provision of EL services by appropriate staff;
  b. Access to appropriate training and information by all school staff. Following of MN Standardized Statewide EL Procedures (or subsequent requirements) for identification, entrance, and exit.
  c. Effective program with written plan for service at all grade and proficiency levels.

d. Retention of appropriate staff (including EL teachers, and contracted service providers) as required by student population.
e. Results from most recent MDE program and financial audits.
f. ACCESS Results, if indicated by the Evaluation Rubric.
g. Language access plan that specifies the school's process and procedures to render effective language assistance to students and adults who communicate in a language other than English.

Please note that if analysis of standardized test scores show that students with special needs and/or students identified as ELs are progressing at rates below the school's non-special needs and/or EL populations, or at rates below their comparable statewide subgroups, then additional Accountability System goals may be developed in conjunction with St. Thomas to measure the school's progress with these students.

- The Board of Directors and School will comply with all applicable state and federal laws including but not limited to:
    a. Minnesota Charter School Law (Minn. Stat. 124E)
        i. Board initial and ongoing training
        ii. Development of Board-approved development plan for leader if applicable
        iii. Governance model requirements
    b. Minnesota Open Meetings Law (Minn. Stat. 471.705)
    c. Teacher licensure: The school will hire well-qualified and appropriately licensed (or otherwise state-approved) teachers. (Minn. Stat. 122A.18 subd. 1)
    d. Fair and open admission/enrollment policies and practices compliant with law.
    e. Background checks: must be completed on staff, Board members, and others with the potential for close contact with students.
    f. Education of Special Education students (Minn. Stat. 125A.02, 125A.03, 125A.24, 125A.65)
    g. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S. C. 1681)
    h. Applicable state and local health and safety requirements. The school must maintain a safe facility that is conducive to learning.
    i. Minnesota Human Rights Act (Chapter 63)
    j. Equal opportunity in athletic programs (Minn. Stat. 121A.04)
    k. Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act (Minn. Stat. 124A.40 to 121A.56)
    l. Minnesota Public Schools Fee Law (Minn. Stat. 123B.34 to 123B.39)
    m. Educational data and records (Minn. Stat. 13.32, 120A.22 subd. 7, and 121A.75)
    n. Student legal records (Minn. Stat. 260B.171 subds. 3 and 5)
    o. The Pledge of Allegiance (Minn. Stat. 121A.11 subd. 3)
    p. Revenue for a charter school (Minn. Stat. 124E.20)
    q. PERA and TRA (Minn. Stat. 353, 354, and 354a)
    r. Ongoing presence of management and financial controls required by Section 8 of the contract
    s. Administration of an open enrollment process and lottery pursuant to Section 7 of the contract
    t. Public Employment Relations Act (Minn. Stat. 179A)
    u. School district audit requirements (Minn. Stat. 123B.75 to 123B.83)
    v. Student immunization records (Minn. Stat. 121A.15)

All violations of applicable law should be reported to St. Thomas.  If St. Thomas believes a violation has occurred, and this violation was not reported, St. Thomas shall first ask the charter school to respond to the information upon which the concern would be based.   If St. Thomas believes a violation has occurred which may be material, it shall also obtain an opinion from a qualified third-party professional(s) regarding the importance of the violation.   In general, a violation will be considered Major if it indicates a deliberate act of wrongdoing, reckless conduct or causes a loss of confidence in the abilities or integrity of the school or seriously jeopardizes the continued operation of the school.   Classification of a finding as material shall be the sole discretion of St. Thomas.

# Evaluation Rubric

The University of St. Thomas (St. Thomas) Accountability System, including the Evaluation Framework and Evaluation Rubric will be used on an annual basis to evaluate schools, and whenever formal decisions are made about the effectiveness of a charter school in meeting its stated mission and objectives as well as the expectations set forth in its contract.

The Accountability System will be used by Authorizing Program staff and by the St. Thomas Charter School Authorizing Board to assess authorized schools' suitability for Contract Renewal, program expansion, and to evaluate any charter school seeking a change of authorizer.

Please note that the rubric below represents a template that will be modified to enable UST to appropriately evaluate each of its authorized schools.

## SECTION I – IS THE LEARNING PROGRAM A SUCCESS?

**1.1 3rd Grade MCA Reading Proficiency: Are students proficient in reading?**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | Less than 40% of are proficient in reading. |
| 2 = Approaching standard | 40-55.0% of students are proficient in reading. |
| 3 = Meets standard | 55.1%-75.0% of students are proficient in reading. |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | More than 75% of students are proficient in reading. |

**Rating: Enter the number that most closely matches your assessment:** ☐

**Comments/Evidence:**

**Data Source:** Minnesota Department of Education *School Report Card*, Test Data spreadsheets

**1.2 MCA Proficiency:** Are students performing as well as or better than the state, the resident district, and comparable schools on MCA math and reading exams?

    **1.2a Reading**
    **1.2b Mathematics**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | More than 10 percentage points below comparison groups |
| 2 = Approaching standard | 6-10 percentage points below comparison groups |
| 3 = Meets standard | Within 5 percentage points of comparison groups |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | Exceeds comparison group by more than 5 percentage points |

| | Reading Proficiency | Score (see criteria for 1-4 above) | Weight | Points earned |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Charter School (CS) | | | | |
| Average of demographic match schools | | | 37.5% | |
| Resident district | | | 37.5% | |
| State | | | 25% | |
| | | | 100% | **Reading Total:** |

| | Math Proficiency | Score (see criteria for 1-4 above) | Weight | Points earned |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Charter School (CS) | | | | |
| Average of demographic match schools | | | 37.5% | |
| Resident district | | | 37.5% | |
| State | | | 25% | |
| | | | 100% | **Math Total:** |

**1.2a Reading:** ☐
**1.2b Mathematics:** ☐
**Enter the overall score produced by the average of these two scores:** ☐

**Comments/Evidence:**

**Source:** MCA data available on MDE website <u>or</u> school self report if cell size is too small, Test data spreadsheets

**1.3 MCA Proficiency, State Demographic Comparison by Race/Ethnicity and FRL: Are student demographic groups (with tested cell sizes greater than 10) performing as well as or better than the statewide average for that student group? All relevant demographic groups will be individually scored per the rubric targets below and averaged to produce a score for each subject area (math/reading). The overall score for the metric is then produced by averaging the subject area scores.**

    **1.3a Reading**
    **1.3b Mathematics**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | Demographic group falls more than 10 percentage points below the state average for that group. |
| 2 = Approaching standard | Demographic group falls 6-10 percentage points below the state average for that group. |
| 3 = Meets standard | Demographic group falls within 5 percentage points of the state average for that group. |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | Demographic group is exceeding statewide performance for that group by more than 5 percentage points. |

| | Charter % Proficient | State % Proficient | % of Charter Student Population | Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Math Proficiency | | | | |
| All | | Included for information only | Included for information only | N/A – Included for information only. |
| Demographic Group 1 | | | Included for information only | |
| Demographic Group 2 (add rows as needed) | | | Included for information only | |
| Average of math scores for each demographic group: | | | | |

| | Charter % Proficient | State % Proficient | % of Charter Student Population | Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reading Proficiency | | | | |
| All | | Included for information only | Included for information only | N/A – Included for information only. |
| Demographic Group 1 | | | Included for information only | |
| Demographic Group 2 (add rows as needed) | | | Included for information only | |
| Average of reading scores for each demographic group: | | | | |

**1.3a Reading:** ☐
**1.3b Mathematics:** ☐

**Enter the overall score produced by the average of these two scores:** [ ]

**Comments/Evidence:**

**Source:** MCA data available on MDE 'MN Report Card'

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**1.4 MCA Progress : Are students maintaining or moving toward proficiency?  Note: Maintaining proficiency is defined as students who were proficient (meeting or exceeding) remaining in either the meeting or exceeding category.  Moving toward proficiency is defined as a student moving up one or more 'levels' (does not meet to partially meets; partially meets to proficient, etc.).**

> **1.4a  Reading**
> **1.4b  Mathematics**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | Less than 35%of students are maintaining or moving toward proficiency. |
| 2 = Approaching standard | 35-50%of students are maintaining or moving toward proficiency. |
| 3 = Meets standard | 51.1-65% of students are maintaining or moving toward proficiency. |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | More than 65% of students are maintaining or moving toward proficiency. |

**1.4a  Reading:** [ ]
**1.4b  Mathematics:** [ ]
**Enter the overall score produced by the average of these two scores:** [ ]

**Comments/Evidence:**

**Source:** MCA  data available on MDE website <u>or</u> school self report if cell size is too small, Test data spreadsheets

---

**1.5  MCA Growth (Comparison Group): Are students making progress at the same or better rate as the state, resident district, and their comparable schools?  Note that this measure uses the Minnesota Department of Education's definition of growth as a student maintaining at a level above "Does Not Meet" or increasing their proficiency level on the MCAs from the most recent prior year of testing data to the current year of testing data.**

> **1.5a  Reading**
> **1.5b  Mathematics**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | More than 10 percentage points below comparison groups |
| 2 = Approaching standard | 6-10 percentage points below comparison groups |
| 3 = Meets standard | Within 5 percentage points of comparison groups |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | Exceeds comparison group by more than 5 percentage points |

| | Reading Growth | Score (see criteria for 1-4 above) | Weight | Points earned |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Charter | | | | |
| Average of demographic match schools/virtual comparison group | | | 37.5% | |
| Resident district | | | 37.5% | |
| State | | | 25% | |
| | | | 100% | **Reading Total:** |

| | Math Growth | Score (see criteria for 1-4 above) | Weight | Points earned |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Charter | | | | |
| Average of demographic match schools | | | 37.5% | |
| Resident district | | | 37.5% | |
| State | | | 25% | |
| | | | 100% | **Math Total:** |

**1.5a  Reading:** ▢
**1.5b  Mathematics:** ▢
**Enter the overall score produced by the average of these two scores:** ▢

**Comments/Evidence:**

**Source:** MCA data available on MDE website <u>or</u> school self report if cell size is too small, Test data spreadsheets

---

**1.6 Are students performing at or above target levels, as measured using the school's selected standardized assessments?**

> **1.6a  Reading**
> **1.6b  Mathematics**

<mark>*Insert School-Specific Assessment*</mark>

| 1 = Does not meet standard | Assessments indicate that a minimal proportion of tested students performed at or above target levels (less than 40%). |
|---|---|
| 2 = Approaching standard | Assessments indicate that an inadequate proportion of tested performed at or above target levels (40%-50%). |
| 3 = Meets standard | Assessments indicate that an adequate proportion of tested performed at or above target levels (50.1%-65%). |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | Assessments indicate that a high proportion of tested |

| | students performed at or above target levels (more than 65%). |
| --- | --- |

**1.6a Reading:** [ ]
**1.6b Math:** [ ]
**Enter the overall score produced by the average of these two scores:** [ ]

**Comments:**

**Source:** Annual Report, End of year report, Test data spreadsheets

---

**1.7 Are students making substantial and adequate gains over time, as measured using the school's selected standardized assessments?**
    **1.7a  Reading**
    **1.7b  Mathematics**

<mark>*Insert School-Specific Assessment*</mark>

| 1 = Does not meet standard | Analysis indicates that a minimal proportion of tested students made expected gains (less than 40%). |
| --- | --- |
| 2 = Approaching standard | Analysis indicates that a inadequate proportion of tested students made expected gains (40%-50%). |
| 3 = Meets standard | Analysis indicates that an adequate proportion of tested students made expected gains (50.1%-65%). |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | Analysis indicates that an adequate proportion of tested students made expected gains (more than 65%). |

**1.7a Reading:** [ ]
**1.7b Math:** [ ]
**Enter the overall score produced by the average of these two scores:** [ ]

**Comments:**

**Source:** Annual Report, End of year report, Test data spreadsheets

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**1.8 Is the school meeting state and authorizer-established targets for graduation rate?**

| 1 = Does not meet standard | The school's graduation rate was below 75% and did not meet state targets. |
| --- | --- |
| 2 = Approaching standard | The school's 4-year graduation rate was between 75 – 85% and/or did not meet state targets. |
| 3 = Meets standard | The school's 4-year graduation rate was between 85.1% and 95% and met state graduation targets. |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | The school's 4-year graduation rate was above 95% and met state targets for graduation. |

**Rating:** [ ]

**Comments:**

**1.9 Does students' performance on post-secondary readiness assessments (i.e.: ACT, SAT, Accuplacer) reflect college and career readiness?**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | Less than 60% of students demonstrated readiness. |
| 2 = Approaching standard | 60-80% of students demonstrated readiness. |
| 3 = Meets standard | 80.1-95% of students demonstrated readiness. |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | More than 95% of students demonstrated readiness. |

**Rating:** ☐

**Comments:**

**Source:** MDE Website (SLEDS), Annual report

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**1.10 Is the school meeting its school-specific academic goal(s)? Each school has at least one measurable school-specific goal based on its mission statement. If the school has more than one goal, scores will be averaged.**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | School has clearly not met any of its school-specific academic goals. |
| 2 = Approaching standard | School is making progress toward meeting all its school-specific academic goals. |
| 3 = Meets standard | School has met its school-specific academic goals. |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | School has met all school-specific academic goals and clearly exceeded expectations for one or more of those goals. |

**Rating:** ☐

**Comments:**

**Source:** Annual report

---

**1.11 Are students learning English (English Learners/EL students) performing at or above the state average for English Learners as measured by MCA proficiency or ACCESS based on school's choice?**

**1.11a: Reading**
**1.11b: Math**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | More than 10 percentage points below state EL performance. |
| 2 = Approaching standard | 6-10 percentage points below state EL performance. |
| 3 = Meets standard | Within 5 percentage points of state EL performance. |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | Exceeds state EL performance by more than 5 percentage points. |

**1.11a: Reading:** [ ]
**1.11b: Math:** [ ]
**Overall Rating:** [ ]

**Comments:**

**Source:** MDE website

---

**1.12  Are students receiving special education services performing at or above the state average for students receiving special education services as measured by MCA proficiency?**

    **1.12a: Reading**
    **1.12b: Math**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | More than 10 percentage points below state special education performance. |
| 2 = Approaching standard | 6-10 percentage points below state special education performance. |
| 3 = Meets standard | Within 5 percentage points of state special education performance. |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | Exceeds state special education performance by more than 5 percentage points. |

**1.12a: Reading:** [ ]
**1.12b: Math:** [ ]
**Overall Rating:** [ ]

**Comments:**

**Source:** MDE website

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| | |
|---|---|
| **1.13  Early Learning: Are preschool and/or prekindergarten students performing at or above target levels on their final assessment, as measured using the school's selected preK and/or kindergarten readiness assessments?** | |
| 1 = Does not meet standard | Assessments indicate that a minimal proportion of tested students performed at or above target levels (less than 40%). |
| 2 = Approaching standard | Assessments indicate that an inadequate proportion of tested students performed at or above target levels (40%-50%). |
| 3 = Meets standard | Assessments indicate that an adequate proportion of tested students performed at or above target levels (50.1%-65%). |

| 4 = Exceeds standard | Assessments indicate that a high proportion of tested students performed at or above target levels (more than 65%). |
| --- | --- |

**Rating:** ⬚

**Comments:**

**Source:** Annual Report, School Selected Assessment Data Spreadsheet

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**1.14 Does the school's learning program exemplify the mission and vision of the school?**

| 1 = Does not meet standard | The learning program does not exemplify the mission and vision of the school in policy or practice, and school leadership and/or the Board do not recognize the need to synchronize the two. |
| --- | --- |
| 2 = Approaching standard | The learning program does not exemplify the mission and vision of the school. School leadership and the Board recognize the need to synchronize the two. |
| 3 = Meets standard | The learning program exemplifies the mission and vision of the school. Staff are able to articulate this through daily teaching. |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | The learning program exemplifies the mission and vision of the school. Staff are able to articulate this through daily teaching. Board, academic, and operational decisions are made with the school's mission in mind. |

**Rating:** ⬚

**Comments:**

**Source:** Site visits, ongoing correspondence, strategic plan or other documentation

---

**1.15 Are students accepted to and enrolling in post-secondary programs at a high rate? Note: Post-secondary programs can include training in the trades, vocational programs, and 2- and 4-year college programs.**

1 = Does not meet standard

 a. Less than 60% of students in the graduating class have been accepted into a post-secondary program
 b. Less than 40% of students in the graduating class have enrolled in a post-secondary program

2 = Approaching standard

 a. Between 60-70%% of students in the graduating class have been accepted into a post- secondary program
 b. Between 40-50% of students in the graduating class have enrolled in a post- secondary program

3 = Meets standard

    a. Between 70.1%-85% of students in the graduating class have been accepted into a post-secondary program
    b. Between 50.1%-60% of students in the graduating class have enrolled in a post-secondary program

4 = Exceeds standard

    a. Over 85% of students in the graduating class have been accepted into a post-secondary program
    b. Over 60% of students in the graduating class have enrolled in a post-secondary program

**1.15a:** ☐
**1.15b:** ☐
**Enter the overall score produced by the average of these two scores:** ☐

**Comments:**

**Source:** MDE Sleds Data, Annual Report (School reported data)

---

**1.16 Are students equitably accessing college and/or career preparation opportunities (e.g. AP, IB, CIS, PSEO, Honors, apprenticeships, internships) at high rates?**

1 = Does not meet standard

    a. Less than 30% of all students accessed one or more college and/or career preparation opportunities in the past year.
    b. BIPOC students accessed college and/or career preparation opportunities at a rate more than 10 percentage points below the rate for their white peers.

2 = Approaching standard

    a. 30-45% of all students accessed one or more college and/or career preparation opportunities in the past year.
    b. BIPOC students accessed college and/or career preparation opportunities at a rate 5-10 percentage points below the rate for their white peers.

3 = Meets standard

    a. 45.1%- 60% of all students accessed one ore more college and/or career preparation opportunities in the past year.
    b. BIPOC students access college and/or career preparation opportunities at roughly the same rate as their white peers.

4 = Exceeds standard

a. Over 60% of all students accessed one or more college and/or career preparation opportunities in the past year.
b. BIPOC students access college and/or career preparation opportunities at roughly the same rate as their white peers.

**1.16a:** [ ]
**1.16b:** [ ]
**Enter the overall score produced by the average of these two scores:** [ ]

**Comments:**

**Source:** MDE SLEDS Data, Annual Report (School Reported Data Chart)

# SECTION 2:  FINANCIAL VIABILITY – DOES THE SCHOOL EXHIBIT STRONG FISCAL HEALTH?

**2.1 Does the school have an active finance committee that meets regularly and reports to the full Board?**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | The school has no active finance committee |
| 2 = Approaching standard | The school's finance committee meets only as needed and only to review financials and/or the finance committee does not report its findings to the full Board. |
| 3 = Meets standard | The finance committee meets monthly, examines financial statements, and provides a thorough report of its findings to the full Board. |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | The finance committee meets at least monthly and examines financial statements, as well as short and long-range financial issues.  Thorough reports of findings are provided to the Board. |

**Rating:** [ ]

**Comments:**

**Source:**  Monthly Board packets; Annual Report, Site visits

**2.2 Does the Board have a fund balance policy that includes fund balance goals over time?**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | The School Board does not have a fund balance policy |
| 2 = Approaching standard | The School Board has a fund balance policy but it does not include established goals over time |
| 3 = Meets standard | The School Board has a fund balance policy including goals over time |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | NOT APPLICABLE. |

**Rating:** ☐

**Comments:**

**Source:** Monthly Board packets; Board policy manual, Quarterly Report

---

**2.3 Does the school have a clean audit with no major findings?**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | The audit is not "clean" OR has at least one of the following: (1) a material weakness on internal controls, (2) a finding on compliance with state law, or (3) three or more other findings |
| 2 = Approaching standard | The audit has two findings, other than internal controls or compliance, but is considered "clean" |
| 3 = Meets standard | The audit is "clean" and has one finding, other than internal controls or compliance |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | The audit has no findings and is "clean" |

**Rating:** ☐

**Comments:**

**Source:** Annual financial audit

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**2.4 Does the school establish and maintain a balanced budget?**
- **Budget is approved and provided to UST before June 30;**
- **Includes a cash flow projection for the year showing positive cash flow;**
- **Is adjusted in a timely fashion when needed;**
- **Meets established fund balance policy goals; and**
- **Does not require major\* program cuts)?**

*\*Major program cuts are defined as cuts that impact a school's ability to deliver its core programming to students in a way that negatively impacts student experience.*

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | A budget is not approved by June 30; the budget is not adequately detailed; no cash flow projection is established; lower than expected enrollment requires major budget adjustments; or the budget does not meet the fund balance policy goals set forth by the Board. |
| 2 = Approaching standard | A detailed budget is approved before June 30 but may not include a cash flow projection for the year; established budget may require adjustment due to lower than expected enrollment; budget meets the fund balance policy goals set forth by the Board. |
| 3 = Meets standard | The detailed budget is approved before June 30 and includes a cash flow projection for the year; established budget is based on realistic enrollment; and is adjusted if needed. The budget meets the fund balance policy goals set forth by the Board and allows for maintenance of core programming. |

| 4 = Exceeds standard | NOT APPLICABLE |
|---|---|

**Rating:** ☐

**Comments:**

**Source:** Monthly Board packets, UST site visits, UST meetings with business manager(s)

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**2.5 Budgeted Enrollment Realization: Does the school's target ADM (as established by initial Board-approved budget) match its actual ADM? (Calculated as actual ADM divided by budgeted ADM.)**

1 = Does not meet standard    Enrollment realization is less than 90%.

2 = Approaching standard      Enrollment realization is 90-95%.

3 = Meets standard     Enrollment realization is greater than 95%.

4 = Exceeds standard  NOT APPLICABLE

**Rating:** _____

**Comments:**

Source:  Monthly Board packets, Quarterly Report, UST site visits, UST meetings with business manager(s)

---

**2.6 Does the school have sufficient cash on hand to meet its near-term obligations?**

| 1 = Does not meet standard | The school has fewer than 30 days cash on hand. |
|---|---|
| 2 = Approaching standard | The school maintains 30-59 days cash on hand. |
| 3 = Meets standard | The school maintains a minimum of 60 days cash on hand or is meeting the cash on hand requirements of its bond covenants, whichever is greater. |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | NOT APPLICABLE |

**Rating:** ☐

**Comments:**

**Source:** Annual Report, Auditor Report, Financial Statements, Board policies

**2.7 For established schools (in operation for at least 4 years) does the school have a sufficient fund balance?**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | The school's fund balance is less than 10% of annual expenditures. |
| 2 = Approaching standard | The school's fund balance is between 10-15% of annual expenditures. |
| 3 = Meets standard | The school's fund balance is more than 15% of annual expenditures. |
| 4 = Exceeds standard AND | The school's fund balance is more than 20% of annual expenditures overall academic outcomes fall within the 'meets standard' range. |

**Rating:** ☐

**Comments:**

**Source:** Annual Report, Auditor Report, Financial Statements, Board policies

---

**2.8 Is the school meeting bond covenants (if applicable)?**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | The school is not meeting one or more bond covenants. |
| 2 = Approaching standard | The school is meeting all bond covenants in the current year, but has been out of compliance with one or more covenants in the past three years. |
| 3 = Meets standard | The school has consistently met all bond covenants. |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | Not Applicable |

**Rating:** ☐

**Comments:**

**Source:** Annual Report, Auditor Report, Financial Statements, Board policies

# SECTION 3: IS THE ORGANIZATION EFFECTIVE AND WELL RUN?

**3.1 Do all Board members meet the statutory requirements for initial and ongoing training on Board roles and responsibilities, governance, finance and employment practices?**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | Three or more Board members are/have been out of compliance during the school year. |
| 2 = Approaching standard | Two or fewer board members are/have been out of compliance during the school year. |
| 3 = Meets standard | All Board members meet training requirements |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | NOT APPLICABLE. |

**Rating:** _____
**Comments:**

**Source:** Monthly Board packets, UST site visits, Statement of compliance sheet

---

**3.2 Does the Board understand and comply with the Open Meeting Law and maintain orderly records including its bylaws, policies, Board/committee minutes, and Board packets?**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | The Board does not understand the requirements of the Open Meeting Law and has been out of compliance more than once in the last year and/or the Board does not maintain its records in an orderly fashion |
| 2 = Approaching standard | The Board exhibits working knowledge of the requirements of the Open Meeting Law and has been out of compliance no more than once in the last year and maintains its records properly, with minor exceptions. |
| 3 = Meets standard | The Board understands and meets the requirements of the Open Meeting Law and maintains its records in an orderly fashion. |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | NOT APPLICABLE |

**Rating:** _____
**Comments:**

**Source:** Board minutes, ongoing correspondence, UST site visits

**3.3  Are all the school's educational staff appropriately licensed?**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | At least one educational staff is not appropriately licensed or does not hold appropriate and current waivers or variances. |
| 2 = Approaching standard | At least one educational staff has been on a waiver or variance for more than one year. |
| 3 = Meets standard | All educational staff are appropriately licensed. |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | NOT APPLICABLE |

**Rating:** ☐
**Comments:**

**Source:**  MDE STAR Discrepancy Reports (self-reported data, crosscheck with licensure file checks) D-1

---

**3.4  Does the school complete criminal background checks in accordance with MN Statute and UST expectations?**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | The school cannot certify that it completes criminal background checks of staff and the Board. |
| 2 = Approaching standard | The school certifies that it completes criminal background checks of the staff but not the Board. |
| 3 = Meets standard | The school certifies that it completes criminal background checks of staff and the Board, as required by school policy. |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | NOT APPLICABLE |

**Rating:** ☐
**Comments:**

**Source:**  UST site visit, Board chair interview, background check policy

**3.5  Is the school compliant with other applicable law?  Note that this measure includes, but is not limited to:**
- **Meeting admissions and enrollment practice/policy requirements**
- **Meeting governance model requirements**
- **Meeting Title IX regulations (e.g. policies/procedures, trainings, Title IX Coordinator)**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | The school is not in compliance with other applicable law. |
| 2 = Approaching standard | NOT APPLICABLE |
| 3 = Meets standard | The school is in compliance with other applicable law. |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | NOT APPLICABLE |

**Rating:** ☐
**Comments:**

**Source:**  Website compliance check, Quarterly Report, UST site visit, Board chair interview

---

**3.6 Do all Board members exhibit understanding of the role of the Board and utilize nonprofit governance best practices including:**

- **Understanding of Board and School Leader roles (governance vs. management)**
- **Annual Board self-evaluation**
- **Annual school-leader evaluation**
- **Annual approval of professional development plan for School Leader (if applicable)**
- **Annual evaluation of Educational Service Provider (CMO/EMO) if applicable**
- **Orientation process for new members**
- **Regular Strategic planning (at least once every five years)**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | At least some Board members do not understand the role of the Board and the role of the School Leader.  Board policies and practices are not transparent or not present.  Board meetings often address issues not central to the role of the board and/or fail to address core functions such as leader evaluation and school financial/academic health. |
| 2 = Approaching standard | Some Board members, but not all, exhibit understanding of their roles as Board members and the role of the School Leader.  Board policies and practices are not always transparent and/or are not fully developed.  The Board inconsistently addresses issues central to its role such as leader evaluation, leader professional development plan approval (if applicable), and school financial/academic health. |
| 3 = Meets standard | The Board exhibits understanding of its role and the role of the School Leader.  The Board policies and practices are generally transparent and systems are in place to maximize effectiveness of the Board, including an orientation process for new members, annual Board self-evaluation, annual  leader (and EMO/CMO if applicable) evaluation, annual approval of leader development plan (if applicable) and a plan for conducting and tracking initial and ongoing training.  The Board engages in regular |

strategic planning. The Board is able to adequately sustain its membership through recruitment efforts.

| 4 = Exceeds standard | NOT APPLICABLE |
|---|---|

**Rating:** [　　]
**Comments:**

**Source:** Site visits, ongoing correspondence, Board minutes, interview with Board chair

---

**3.7 Does the Board regularly review, update, and approve its bylaws and policies such that they maintain compliance with state law and current best practices?**

| 1 = Does not meet standard | Board policies and/or bylaws are outdated and not reviewed regularly. |
|---|---|
| 2 = Approaching standard | Board policies and/or bylaws are reviewed and approved as needed but are not comprehensively reviewed on a regularly scheduled basis. |
| 3 = Meets standard | Board policies and bylaws are reviewed for content and legal compliance, updated, and approved on a regularly scheduled basis, no less than once every three years. |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | NOT APPLICABLE |

**Rating:** [　　]
**Comments:**

**Source:** Board minutes, Board policies, Governance binder, Quarterly Report, UST site visit

---

**3.8 Does the Board submit a complete Board packet (including agenda, minutes, director report, other relevant documents, check register, cash flow sheet, enrollment report, balance sheet and income and expense report), to be received by all members of the Board, school leadership, and UST at least three days prior to all Board meetings?**

| 1 = Does not meet standard | Board packets are not submitted on time AND are incomplete |
|---|---|
| 2 = Approaching standard | Board packets are submitted on time (more than 75 percent of the time) but incomplete OR not submitted on time (less than 75 percent of the time) but complete |
| 3 = Meets standard | Board packets are submitted on time (more than 75 percent of the time) and complete |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | NOT APPLICABLE |

**Rating:** [　　]
**Comments:**

**Source:** Monthly Board packets; Board materials tracking document (G-1 CS info)

**3.9 Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to English Learners (ELs)?  This includes:**

- **Following MN Standardized Statewide EL Procedures for identification**
- **Following MN Standardize Statewide EL Procedures for entrance and exit.**
- **Maintaining an established EL program with a written plan for service at all grade and proficiency levels**
- **Securing appropriate staffing levels with staff who hold appropriate licenses and have knowledge of current legislation and research based best practices for serving EL students.**
- **Supplying relevant professional development to all staff**
- **Following a Board approved language access plan that specifies the school's process and procedures to render effective language assistance to students and adults who communicate in a language other than English**
- **Ensuring that information on student EL status is available to all classroom teachers**
- **Providing staff with appropriate training.**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | The school is <u>not</u> fulfilling its legal obligations regarding ELs and requires substantial improvement |
| 2 = Approaching standard | The school is fulfilling all of its legal obligations regarding ELs but requires some improvements |
| 3 = Meets standard | The school is fulfilling its legal obligations regarding ELs and requires no considerable improvements |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | NOT APPLICABLE |

**Rating:** ☐

**Comments:**

**Source:** UST site visits, Reference EL Packet, Formalized complaints at MDE, or Critical Elements review (SP-1)

---

**3.10 Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with individual education plans (IEPs)?  This includes:**
- **Having a school-specific TSES manual that is Board-approved.**
- **Engaging a special education director who is actively involved in working with special education staff and school leadership.**
- **Securing appropriate staffing levels with staff who hold appropriate licenses and have knowledge of current legislation and research based best practices for serving students with IEPs.**
- **Contracting with entities to provide effective services to students when necessary.**
- **Completing annual IEP meetings on time.**
- **Having been subject to no investigations related to special needs students that resulted in findings.**
- **Having no findings related to special education funding on annual financial audit.**
- **Providing staff with appropriate training.**

| 1 = Does not meet standard | The school is not fulfilling its legal obligations regarding students with special needs and requires substantial improvement |
|---|---|
| 2 = Approaching standard | The school is fulfilling all of its legal obligations regarding students with special needs but requires some improvements |
| 3 = Meets standard | The school is fulfilling its legal obligations regarding students with special needs and requires no considerable improvements |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | NOT APPLICABLE |

**Rating:** ☐

**Comments:**

**Source: Quarterly report,** UST site visits, Reference: special education investigation search on MDE website and special education training materials; Special education director interview

---

**3.11 Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to the delivery of a quality Prekindergarten instructional program. This includes:**

- **Ensuring Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening is completed.**
- **Securing appropriate staffing.**
- **Supplying relevant professional development to all staff.**
- **Implementing culturally responsive comprehensive child assessment/s.**
- **Utilizing the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPs).**
- **Supporting an effective transition to Kindergarten.**
- **Referring students to community-based resources as needed.**

| 1 = Does not meet standard | The school is not fulfilling its legal obligations regarding preK students and requires substantial improvement |
|---|---|
| 2 = Approaching standard | The school is fulfilling all of its legal obligations regarding preK students but requires some improvements |
| 3 = Meets standard | The school is fulfilling its legal obligations regarding preK students and requires no considerable improvements |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | NOT APPLICABLE |

**Rating:** ☐

**Comments:**

**Source:** Site Visits, Interviews, Quarterly Reports

**3.12 Does the school have a high attendance rate?**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | The attendance rate is less than 85 percent |
| 2 = Approaching standard | The attendance rate is between 85 and 89.9 percent |
| 3 = Meets standard | The attendance rate is 90-94.9 percent |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | The attendance rate is more than 95 percent |

**Rating:** ⬜

**Comments:**

**Source:** Annual reports, MDE website (data downloads)

---

**3.13 Is the school able to maintain a high percentage of teacher retention?**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | Fewer than 70 percent of teachers remained at the school last year (excluding retirements). |
| 2 = Approaching standard | Between 70 and 84 percent of teachers remained at the school last year (excluding retirements). |
| 3 = Meets standard | More than 85 percent of teachers remained at the school last year (excluding retirements). |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | Over the course of the contract (or at least 3 years) teacher retention has consistently remained high (>85 percent) |

**Rating:** ⬜
**Comments:**

**Source:** Annual report

---

**3.14 Are the school's teachers and staff participating in a broad base of professional development in service of students' academic and behavioral needs and supportive of the school's mission? Types of development opportunities include, but are not limited to:**

- **Required health and safety trainings.**
- **IX training processes.**
- **Supporting students with IEPs.**
- **Supporting English Learners.**
- **Mission-related.**
- **Equity and cultural relevance.**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | The school a limited number of training opportunities. Participation in professional development is low, with less than 50% of staff participate in the opportunities. |
| 2 = Approaching standard | The school offers a menu of development opportunities that include required trainings. Participation in most or all of these trainings is presented as optional resulting in low participation (less than 50% of staff participate). |
| 3 = Meets standard | The school offers a menu of development opportunities that include required trainings as well as learning opportunities that forward the school's academic, behavioral and mission-related priorities. Participation is mandated for required trainings. |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | The school offers a robust menu of development opportunities that include required trainings as well as learning opportunities that forward the school's academic, behavioral and mission-related priorities. Including opportunities for subject-area and curriculum-specific trainings. Participation is mandated for required trainings. |

**Rating:** ☐
**Comments:**

**Source:** Annual report (Professional Development Tracking Chart)

---

**3.15   Does the school generally retain its students from October 1st through the close of the school year?**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | Student retention rates are more than 10% below the school's agreed-upon target rates. |
| 2 = Approaching standard | Student retention rates are 5-10% below the school's agreed-upon target rates. |
| 3 = Meets standard | The school is consistently fully enrolled. Student retention rates are within 5% or above the school's agreed-upon target rates |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | NOT APPLICABLE |

**Rating:** ☐
**Comments:**

**Source:** Annual report, renewal application

**3.16 Does the school exhibit a high level of parent satisfaction as measured by the following?**

    **3.16a**    **The percentage of parents surveyed who "agree" or "strongly agree" that they would recommend the school to a friend.**
    **3.16b**    **Survey response rate**

1 = Does not meet standard

    3.16a    Less than 70% of parents surveyed indicate they would recommend the school to friend.
    3.16b    The school's survey response rate was less than 25%.

2 = Approaching standard

    3.16a    75-85% of parents surveyed indicate they would recommend the school to a friend.
    3.16b    The school's survey response rate was 25-35%.

3 = Meets standard

    3.16a    85.1-95% of parents surveyed indicate they would recommend the school to a friend.
    3.16b    The school's survey response rate was 35.1-45%.

4 = Exceeds standard

    3.16a    95% or more of parents surveyed indicate they would recommend the school to a friend.
    3.16b    The school's survey response rate was great than 45%.

**3.16a Rating:** _____
**3.16b Rating:** _____

**Overall Rating:** _____

**Comments:**
**Source:** Annual report, School parent satisfaction survey--overall satisfaction indicator

---

**3.17 Is the school's physical plant safe and conducive to learning? This includes:**

- **Providing adequate security.**
- **Meeting health and safety code requirements.**
- **Providing accessibility for all students.**
- **Ensuring the facility, furniture and equipment is clean and well-maintained.**
- **Providing appropriate sized spaces for enrollment and student-teacher ratios.**
- **Layout and design meet the academic and social needs of students, teachers, staff, families and the community.**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = Does not meet standard | The facility requires much improvement in order to provide a safe environment that is conducive to learning.  Significant health and safety requirements have not been met OR the school lacks many conditions such as the following:  a) a design well-suited to meet the curricular and social needs of its students, faculty, and community members; b) a size appropriate for the enrollment and student-teacher ratios in each class; c) adequate maintenance and security; d) well-maintained equipment and furniture that match the educational needs of the students; e) accessibility to all students. |
| 2 = Approaching standard | Significant health and safety requirements are being met, but the facility needs some improvement in order to provide a safe environment that is conducive to learning.  It partially – but not fully – provides conditions such as the following:  a) a design well-suited to meet the curricular and social needs of its students, faculty, and community members; b) a size appropriate for the enrollment and student-teacher ratios in each class; c) adequate maintenance and security; d) well-maintained equipment and furniture that match the educational needs of the students; e) accessibility to all students. |
| 3 = Meets standard | Significant health and safety code requirements are being met AND the facility generally provides a safe environment that is conducive to learning, based on conditions such as: a) a design well-suited to meet the curricular and social needs of its students, faculty, and community members; b) a size appropriate for the enrollment and student-teacher ratios in each class; c) adequate maintenance and security; d) well-maintained equipment and furniture that match the educational needs of the students; e) accessibility to all students. |
| 4 = Exceeds standard | All health and safety code requirements are being met AND the facility generally provides a safe environment that is conducive to learning, based on conditions such as: a) a design well-suited to meet the curricular and social needs of its students, faculty, and community members; b) a size appropriate for the enrollment and student-teacher ratios in each class; c) adequate maintenance and security; d) well-maintained equipment and furniture that match the educational needs of the students; e) accessibility to all students.  Additionally, the facility meets the mission of the school. |

**Rating:** ☐
**Comments:**

**Source:**  Authorizer observation

---

**3.18 Does the school have systems and structures in place to effectively identify and support students needing academic and/or behavioral supports in a timely fashion?  This includes:**

- **A clear process to identify students needing support, understood and implemented consistently.**

- **A robust system of tiered supports.**
- **Timely execution of these supports.**
- **Use of data to evaluate the effectiveness of supports and the system.**
- **Effective communication between stakeholders (teachers, school staff, families, and students).**

1 = Does not meet standard

The school does not have adequate systems to identify students needing supports. When students are identified the systems in place move slowly, taking weeks or months to execute the eventual support. Communication within systems is poor and internal/external stakeholders (teachers, school staff, parents, students) do not always receive timely or adequate communication.

2 = Approaching standard

The school has systems to identify students needing supports, but they may not always work as designed. When students are identified the systems in place move at a moderate pace, taking several weeks to a month to execute the eventual support. Communication within systems is patchy and internal/external stakeholders (teachers, school staff, parents, students) receive communication, but it may not always be timely or adequate.

3 = Meets standard

The school has systems to identify students needing supports, which work reliably and are understood and used regularly by individuals throughout the system (teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, counselors, parents, etc.). When students are identified the systems in place move efficiently, taking days or weeks to execute the needed support. Communication within systems is reliable and internal/external stakeholders (teachers, school staff, parents, students) receive all necessary communication in a clear and timely fashion.

4 = Exceeds standard

The school has systems with built in redundancies (multiple opportunities for reporting) to identify students needing support. The systems work reliably and are understood and used regularly by individuals throughout the system (teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, counselors, parents, etc.). When students are identified the systems in place move efficiently, taking hours or days to execute the needed support unless mandated timelines are longer. Communication within systems is reliable and internal/external stakeholders (teachers, school staff, parents, students) receive all necessary communication in a clear and timely fashion.

**Rating:** ____

**Comments:**

**Source:** Quarterly report, Site visits, ongoing correspondence, interviews

**3.19 There are opportunities and structures in place for families to engage in their child's education that include the following:**

**3.19a    Processes to communicate academic performance and other pertinent school information that are accessible to families including the consideration of language needs (e.g. conferences).**

**3.19b    Processes to elicit feedback from families are accessible and seek to reach the broader school community including consideration of language needs.  Feedback processes include but are not limited to an annual survey.**

**3.19c    Opportunities for parents/guardians to support their child's education and/or the school (e.g. volunteering, parent organization, family events).**

---

1 = Does not meet standard

a.    The school does not have a plan to communicate academic performance and other pertinent school information.  Communication is not available in languages other than English.

a.    The school does the school have a plan to elicit feedback from families or the plan reaches only a limited set of families.

b.    Less than 25% of families/guardians participated in any engagement opportunity.

---

2 = Approaching standard

b.    The school has a plan to communicate academic performance and other pertinent school information, however, the implementation of this plan is inconsistent or in the development phase.

c.    The school has a plan for eliciting feedback from families representing the broad school community. However, implementation of this plan is inconsistent or in the development phase.

d.    Between 25.1 - 40% of families/guardians participated in an engagement opportunity.

---

3 = Meets standard

a.    The school has a comprehensive plan to communicate academic performance and other pertinent school information with families, which is consistently executed.  The plan includes an awareness of the language preferences and needs of families and strategies for providing communication in multiple languages as needed.

b.    The school has a comprehensive plan to elicit feedback from all families. The plan includes an awareness of the language preferences and needs of families, strategies for providing communication in multiple languages as needed and methods for ensuring representation from the broad school community.

c.    Between 40.1 - 55% of families/guardians participated in an engagement opportunity.

---

4 = Exceeds standard

a.    The school has a comprehensive plan to communicate academic performance and other pertinent school information with families, which is executed with fidelity.  School survey data and interviews with families provide evidence of parent satisfaction with home-school communications.

b.    The school has a formalized process to elicit feedback from families reflective of the broad school community, which is executed with fidelity.  The school is able to demonstrate how family feedback is reviewed and utilized in a timely manner.  School survey data and interviews with families provide evidence of parent knowledge of and satisfaction with feedback opportunities.

| c. | More than 55% of families/guardians participated in an engagement opportunity. |
| --- | --- |

**3.19a Rating: _____**

**3.19b Rating: _____**

**3.19c Rating: _____**

**Overall Rating:**

**Comments:**

**Source:** Site visits, ongoing correspondence, interviews

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**3.20 Is the school committed to creating a welcoming, inclusive, and equitable environment that is open to all students?  This is evidenced by the following:**


**3.20a. Marketing/outreach targets socioeconomically and racially diverse populations, which includes having materials available in multiple languages.**
**3.20b Enrollment policies and practices are accessible and transparent.  Supports are available to families as needed to navigate the application and enrollment process.**
**3.20c. The school demonstrates a commitment to cultivating a Board and staff that is reflective of the student population.**

1 = Does not meet standard

   a.  The school's marketing strategy marginalizes or ignores students from diverse backgrounds and/or those who are low income.  Materials are only available in English.
   b.  Enrollment policies and practices are not transparent and/or result in accessibility barriers for low-income students and students of color.
   c.  The Board and staff are not representative of the students the school serves.


2 = Approaching standard

   a.  The school's marketing strategy includes a plan to recruit students from diverse backgrounds and/or those who are low income. However, implementation of the plan is inconsistent and materials are only available in English.
   b.  Enrollment policies and practices are transparent.  However, families encounter challenges navigating the enrollment process.
   c.  While the Board and/or staff are not representative of the students the school serves, the school is committed to recruiting Board members and staff who are representative and has identified recruitment strategies to this end.

3 = Meets standard

   a.  The school's marketing strategy includes an actionable plan to recruit students from diverse backgrounds and/or those who are low income. The plan is actively utilized. Materials are available in multiple languages.
   b.  School enrollment policies and practices are clear and easily navigated by families.  Methods for accessing support for families needing assistance are readily apparent.
   c.  The school employs strategies to recruit and retain Board members and staff who are representative of the student population.  Board and staff composition reflect these efforts.

4 = Exceeds standard            NOT APPLICABLE

**3.20a Rating: _____**

**3.20b Rating: _____**

**3.20c Rating: _____**

**Overall Rating: ___**

**Comments:**

**Source**:  Quarterly report**,** Site visits, ongoing correspondence, interviews

# XIV. OVERSIGHT SYSTEM

As highlighted above under Accountability Framework, the University of St. Thomas (St. Thomas) is committed to fulfilling its role as a charter school authorizer by holding its schools accountable for a range of results. Through a combination of annual reports, site visits, Board meeting packets, and Annual School Evaluations, St. Thomas will uphold its legal obligation to make sure the schools we authorize are reaching (or making adequate progress toward) the goals and benchmarks outlined in their charter contracts and Minnesota statute. This collective body of evidence will also form the basis for contract renewal decisions.

## Annual Reporting

St. Thomas authorized charter schools are required to submit a minimum of four reports annually. The content to be included in each report is specified in the current year's Annual Reporting Guidelines document, provided to the schools on a yearly basis. St. Thomas's response to school reports may contain include statements of affirmation for positive performance, minor constructive criticism, or a formal notice of intervention, as laid out in the Range of Interventions Document.

### Annual Report

MN Statute 124E.16, Subd. 2(a) states, *"A charter school must publish an annual report approved by the Board of Directors. The annual report must at least include information on school enrollment, student attrition, governance and management, staffing, finances, management agreements with a CMO or EMO, academic performance, innovative practices and implementation, and future plans. A charter school may combine this report with the reporting required under section 120B.11 governing comprehensive achievement and civic readiness. A charter school must post the annual report on the school's official website. A charter school also must distribute the annual report by publication, mail, or electronic means to its authorizer, school employees, and parents and legal guardians of students enrolled in the charter school. The reports are public data under chapter 13."*

State law requires charter schools to submit annual reports to the Minnesota Department of Education and its authorizer; St. Thomas utilizes an October 1st deadline. These reports are designed to ensure prudent authorizer oversight without overburdening school leaders and to provide important information to school stakeholders. Each St. Thomas-authorized charter school will self-report on its goals and outcomes in the Annual Report. Additionally, St. Thomas requires that the Annual Report include additional elements as enumerated in the current year's Annual Reporting Guidelines document.

### Quarterly Reports

St. Thomas requires the schools we authorize to submit at least three additional reports yearly. Similar to the Annual Report, for the Quarterly Reports, each St. Thomas-authorized charter school will self-report on its goals and outcomes as articulated in the current year's Annual Reporting Guidelines document.

# Site Visit Overview

One of the many important ways St. Thomas gathers information about the schools we authorize is through on-site visits. Site visits allow the authorizer to observe the school in action firsthand, hear directly from key stakeholders, and corroborate school-reported information and data. St. Thomas conducts four different types of site visits: Monitoring, Renewal, Diagnostic, and informal. Monitoring Site Visits (MSV) and Renewal Site Visits (RSV) follow a common, structured protocol to ensure teams accumulate needed evidence consistent with performance indicators identified in the contract; more specifics regarding the characteristics of these visits are described below. Each MSV and RSV results in a report distributed to the school and Board, and St. Thomas staff use the report as a resource when completing annual and end of term evaluations. Diagnostic Site Visits (DSV) are employed at the discretion of St. Thomas and are typically used if a school has been issued an intervention and conditions merit collection of evidence via a site visit. Additionally, St. Thomas may make informal visits to schools for special events or check-ins. These do not follow a prescribed protocol and may or may not include focus groups/classroom observations.

## Monitoring Site Visits

MSVs are conducted in the fall of each year to collect evidence of implementation of the school's academic program and progress toward meeting academic, financial, governance, and operational goals outlined in the contract with St. Thomas. These visits are typically conducted by a single St. Thomas staff member (generally the school's primary liaison) who, over the course of one day, interviews key stakeholders, conducts classroom observations, and attends a Board meeting. Observations and evidence gathered during MSVs culminate in a site visit report provided to the Board of Directors and School Leadership shortly after the visit. The report serves as one of the resources St. Thomas uses for monitoring progress towards contract goals and completing the annual evaluation.

## Renewal Site Visit

RSVs follow a protocol similar to Monitoring Site Visits but are conducted by a team of reviewers the fall/winter prior to the end of the school's contract term. These visits coincide with a school's submission of their Application for Contract Renewal. Similar to MSVs, RSVs focus on implementation of the school's academic program and progress toward meeting academic, financial, governance, and operational goals outlined in the contract. A site visit report is provided to the Board of Directors and school leadership shortly after the visit and it serves as one piece of evidence used by St. Thomas to evaluate the school's performance during the entire term of the contract. Report information is also used as one piece of the evidence base for a school's End of Term Evaluation.

## Diagnostic Site Visits

St. Thomas may conduct a Diagnostic Site Visit at any time to fulfill its duties as an authorizer. A DSV may be held, with or without notice to: investigate a complaint, determine a school's readiness to open, or collect additional evidence of implementation following an intervention. The frequency, duration, and intensity of these DSVs depends greatly on the school's standing with St. Thomas.

In addition to DSVs, St. Thomas may extend the length of an MSV or RSV from one to one-and-a-half days for schools who are, at the point of the visit, recognized in a status of intervention. In

these cases, St. Thomas will add to the standard protocol focus group additional questions that are aimed at collecting evidence to monitor a school's intervention response.

**Informal Visits to Schools**

St. Thomas may visit a school to document best practices, attend a school-wide assembly, celebration or other public event. These visits typically do not rely on the protocol used for MSVs or RSVs and can be impromptu and informal. All schools receive an informal spring visit, the schedule for which is built based on the school's current needs and circumstances and, at a minimum, includes a meeting with the School Leader.

## Site Visit Protocol

Site visits are used by St. Thomas to collect evidence for ongoing monitoring and oversight of expectations stated in contracts. This St. Thomas Site Visit Protocol is used to guide individuals and teams while on site at schools. The protocol incorporates specific indicators from the St. Thomas Evaluation Framework, aligned with the three key questions: Is the academic program a success? Is the school financially viable? and Is the organization effective and well-run?

## Site Visit Process

**Timeline** - St. Thomas generally follows this timeline for monitoring or renewal site visits:

| 1-2 months prior to visit | St. Thomas |
|---|---|
| | ○ Notifies school of fall/spring visits |
| | ○ Secures a visit date (ideally on a day of a scheduled Board meeting) |
| | School |
| | ○ Identifies site visit contact person |
| | ○ Confirms site visit date |
| 3 weeks prior to the visit | St. Thomas |
| | ○ Responds to questions regarding schedule creation |
| | School |
| | ○ Begins schedule creation |
| | ○ RSV-Identifies focus group participants and meeting times |
| 2 weeks prior to visit | St. Thomas |
| | ○ Responds to questions regarding schedule creation |
| | ○ RSV - Creates team tools, shares focus group note templates, copies of questions and observation forms. |
| | ○ RSV – orients team members to site visit protocol and expectations |
| | ○ RSV – Sends an email introduction of the St. Thomas team to the leader and Board |
| | School |
| | ○ School contact secures and provides links to the following information: |

| | |
|---|---|
| | o Proposed visit schedule<br>o Organizational chart and/or list of staff (names, grades, subjects, e-mail address)<br>o Map of the school with teachers, grades and classroom location identified (or numbering system and location and grade of teachers);<br>o Board policies and handbooks for teachers, parents, and/or students.<br>o School master schedule<br>o Identifies Wi-Fi password/s for the site visit team to use while on site.<br>o Continues to schedule focus group members as needed |
| 1 week prior to the visit | St. Thomas<br>    Works with school to adjust schedule if necessary<br>    Confirms final schedule<br>    *The review team will receive/review the following materials prior to a renewal visit:*<br>    Contract, including accountability plan<br>    Most recent Board packets<br>    Most recent annual report and audit report<br>    Most recent St. Thomas Evaluation<br>    Intervention materials, if applicable (e.g. improvement plan, letters of notice, etc.),<br>    Previous site visit write-ups/reports, relevant correspondence with school, and any relevant materials the school<br>    Board/leadership request St. Thomas to review prior to visit.<br>School<br>    Continues to schedule focus group members as needed<br>    Notifies all teachers/staff of visit and that observers are not evaluating individual teacher performance, but are collecting information to understand the school as a whole |
| Day of Site Visit | St. Thomas<br>    Facilitates site visit<br>    monitoring visit: 1 St. Thomas team member<br>    Renewal visit: 4-6 St. Thomas team members<br>School<br>    Sets up a workspace for the team/individual, including a note with wifi password<br>    Assists focus group participants in finding correct location at designated time |
| Following the Visit | St. Thomas<br>    Distributes the Site Visit Report to the School Leader and Board 5 business days after the visit. |

In the weeks preceding site visits, the St. Thomas review will check in with the School Leader regarding the schedule, arrange logistics, and learn of any unique scheduling circumstances for the day of the visit. In particular, St. Thomas should be aware of testing, new teachers in the building, substitutes, and special programming. The visit schedule established in advance of the meeting

will include focus group times, locations, and participants. The schedule will also identify when classroom observations are scheduled, but not the exact classrooms.

While on site, St. Thomas will check in with school leadership to review schedule and space for the day and complete the tasks listed above. Per the agreed upon schedule, the review team will conduct observations and focus group interviews with school leaders and staff with a long-term perspective in mind. The purpose of the interviews is to understand how the school operates at the point-in-time of the visit. Expectations for focus group interview composition are: School Leader and leadership team, teachers (4-6 participants), students (4-6 participants), parents (4-6 participants), business manager, and Board--chair plus other Board members (less than a quorum). Interview participants will be limited to the group type. The team may ask the interviewee to provide evidence to substantiate a statement (e.g. Board minutes). An additional component of MSV and RSVs is St. Thomas's attendance at and observation of a Board meeting. This component typically does not include the participation of a full renewal visit team.

During RSVs each focus group interview may have a lead who asks questions and a note taker who will record answers from focus group participants. These notes are used by the lead to generate the site visit report. RSV teams may rely on a single, shared note-taking document so all team notes are in one location.

In addition to focus group interviews, St. Thomas will observe classrooms to learn about school culture and see how/whether the school's mission is reflected in classrooms. MSVs will typically include 5 to 6 classroom observations and RSVs will typically include 12-20. The St. Thomas's Classroom Observation Form is non-evaluative and aligned with the site visit indicators, it can be found on page 193-194 of the manual.

It is important to note that St. Thomas reserves the right to modify the timeline and structure of a visit in consultation with a school—including the number and type of focus groups-- in order to fit the needs, structure, and circumstances of a school. Examples where modifications are needed could include, but are not limited to: multi-site schools, teacher-powered schools, schools serving a particularly high population of students receiving English Learner or Special Education services, etc.

**Sample Daily Site Visit Schedule**

| Time | Action |
|---|---|
| 10:30-11:00 AM | Team arrives at school and morning meeting |
| 11:00-12:00 PM | Interview with school leadership focus group |
| 12:00-1:30 PM | Classroom observations |
| 1:30-1:45 PM | *break* |
| 1:45-2:15 PM | Financial service provider |
| 2:15-2:45 PM | Student Focus group |
| 2:45-3:15 PM | Teacher Focus Group |
| 3:15–3:45 PM | Parent Focus Group |
| 3:45-4:00 | *break* |
| 4:00–4:30 PM | Teacher Focus Group |
| 4:30-5:00 | Check in with school leadership - snack |
| 5:00-5:45 PM | Board Focus Group |
| 5:45-6:00 PM | *prep for Board meeting* |
| 6:00-7:30 PM | Observe Board Meeting: *5-10 minute verbal report-out\** |

**Focus Group Interviews:**
Out of respect for focus group participants, individuals leading focus group interviews should inform participants of the intent and processes associated with site visits; the following information should be shared at the beginning of every focus group interview:

- Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to visit the school, we appreciate having time with you to discuss today's site visit.
- My name is _____ and I am the lead for today's site visit. (If RSV) - I am joined today by: [TEAM MEMBER NAMES].
- The purpose of our site visits is to observe the school in action firsthand, hear directly from key stakeholders, and corroborate school-reported information and data. We use this information as a piece of evidence for our oversight of the expectations articulated in our charter contract between St. Thomas and this Board.

- We are scheduled to meet with School Leader and leadership team, _#_ teachers (add #), _#_ students, _#_ parents, the business manager, and _#_ Board members including the chair.
- Additionally, we plan to observe classrooms.
- At the end of the day, we will take 5 minutes with the Board to share preliminary findings from today's visit, so this may seem high level. A more detailed report will be shared with school leadership and the Board chair in the next few days.
- It is very important to know that the outcome of this site visit is one piece of evidence of St. Thomas's overall oversight and data collection and is not comprehensive or summative in its scope. This visit represents point-in-time evidence used to help us understand the summative evidence we receive such as: state assessment results, growth assessment data, financial audits and compliance reports.
- Site Visit findings fall into three categories from the contract:
  - Is the academic program a success?
  - Is the school financially viable?
  - Is the organization effective and well-run?
  …and are aligned with specific performance indicators within these three categories.
- The information you share will be anonymized; we will not share your name or anything specific to you with other school stakeholders and we will not quote you directly in any report. We would share "teachers reported x" or "students shared that x".
- Thank you again for your time. Do you have any questions?

**Site Visit Tools**

### *Focus Group Questions and Notes*
In every site visit focus group, the St. Thomas team will use a bank of questions that are created for specific focus group types and aligned with the site visit criteria. The bank of questions is available upon request. The team may record focus group participant answers into an electronic note taking form. Notes are used as a resource when generating the site visit report. Focus group participant responses are anonymous. Specific responses, attributable to a person, are not shared with the school; information gathered during focus group interviews is used only by the team as evidence to generate findings for the report. Note that St. Thomas reserves the right to pose questions not in the bank of questions based on the needs, structure, and circumstances of a school.

### *Classroom Observation Form*
Every MSV and RSV will include classroom visits. Classroom observations are non-evaluative, the information gathered is used by the team to understand things such as: how is the school's mission reflected in classrooms? All observations follow a similar format and use a form that incorporates specific site visit criteria. Visits are typically 10-20 minutes in length and every St. Thomas team member is oriented to the use of the form. Completed observation forms are not shared directly or indirectly with the school but are used as a resource when generating the site visit report. The report may make general references to trends observed across classrooms and will not identify specific teachers or content attributable to a specific teacher. The classroom observation form is on page 193-194 of this manual.

*Board Observation Form*

A Board observation is a component of both MSVs and RSVs. These observations are used by the team to understand things such as: is the Board operating in compliance with Open Meeting Law? Board observations use a form that incorporates specific site visit criteria. Observations cover the length of the Board meeting. Completed observation forms are not shared with the school but are used as a resource when generating the site visit report. The report may make general references to trends observed in Board meetings and will not identify specific Board members or attendees. The Board observation form is included on page 217-218 of this manual.

## Preliminary Findings

Once focus group interviews and classroom observations are completed and the Board convenes for an official meeting, the St. Thomas site visit lead will offer a verbal report out of *preliminary* findings from the visit. *St. Thomas requests 10 minutes on the school's Board meeting agenda to offer these preliminary findings.* Schools should note that the information shared at this point is *preliminary* and a written report will be constructed in the days following the visit.

During the report of preliminary findings, the St. Thomas lead will explain context for the visit (see bullets used for focus group above). Once context is set, the lead will share preliminary findings from the site visit.

- 1-2 findings re: the academic program
- 1-2 findings re: the school's financial practices
- 3-4 findings re: the school's operational practices

## Site Visit Criteria

As noted above, MSVs and RSVs assist us in gathering evidence for specific indicators from St. Thomas' Evaluation Framework. The tools used and evidence gathered align with the three key questions. The criteria listed below are indicators selected from St. Thomas' Evaluation Framework that lend themselves to evidence collection during a site visit. Also noted above, MSVs and RSVs for schools identified with Interventions Status during the time a site visit occurs may have additional criteria added to support the monitoring needs of the specific intervention.

Finally, as with the focus group question bank, the classroom observation form, and Board observation form, the site visit report template identifies specific indicator numbers, so the evidence collected can be incorporated into the report and findings can be easily referenced against the performance framework.

**MSV and RSV Site Visit Criteria**
1. **Is the academic program a success?**
   1.14 Does the school's learning program exemplify the mission and vision of the school?

2. **Is the school financially viable?**
   2.1 Does the school have an active finance committee that meets regularly and reports to the full Board?

2.4 Does the school establish and maintain a balanced budget?
- Budget is approved and provided to UST before June 30;
- Includes a cash flow projection for the year showing positive cash flow;
- Is adjusted in a timely fashion when needed;
- Meets established fund balance policy goals; and
- Does not require major* program cuts?
- *Major program cuts are defined as cuts that impact a school's ability to deliver its core programming to students in a way that negatively impacts student experience.*

2.5 Budgeted Enrollment Realization: Does the school's target ADM (as established by initial Board-approved budget) match its actual ADM? (Calculated as actual ADM divided by budgeted ADM.)

3. **Is the organization effective and well-run?**
    3.1 Do all Board members meet the statutory requirements for initial and ongoing training on Board roles and responsibilities, governance, finance and employment practices?

    3.2 Does the Board understand and comply with the Open Meeting Law and maintain orderly records including its bylaws, policies, Board/committee minutes, and Board packets?

    3.5 Is the school compliant with other applicable law? Note that this measure includes, but is not limited to:
    - Meeting admissions and enrollment practice/policy requirements
    - Meeting governance model requirements
    - Meeting Title IX regulations (e.g. policies/procedures, trainings, Title IX Coordinator)

    3.6 Do all Board members exhibit understanding of the role of the Board and utilize nonprofit governance best practices including:
    - Understanding of Board and School Leader roles (governance vs. management)
    - Annual Board self-evaluation
    - Annual school-leader evaluation
    - Annual approval of professional development plan for School Leader (if applicable)
    - Annual evaluation of Educational Service Provider (CMO/EMO) if applicable
    - Orientation process for new members
    - Regular Strategic planning (at least once every five years)

    3.7 Does the Board regularly review, update, and approve its bylaws and policies such that they maintain compliance with state law and current best practices?

    3.9 Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to English Learners (ELs)? This includes:
    - Following MN Standardized Statewide EL Procedures for identification
    - Following MN Standardize Statewide EL Procedures for entrance and exit.
    - Maintaining an established EL program with a written plan for service at all grade and proficiency levels
    - Securing appropriate staffing levels with staff who hold appropriate licenses and have knowledge of current legislation and research based best practices for serving EL students.
    - Supplying relevant professional development to all staff

- Ensuring that information on student EL status is available to all classroom teachers
- Providing staff with appropriate training.

3.10 Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with individual education plans (IEPs)? This includes:
- Having a school-specific TSES manual that is Board-approved.
- Engaging a special education director who is actively involved in working with special education staff and school leadership.
- Securing appropriate staffing levels with staff who hold appropriate licenses and have knowledge of current legislation and research based best practices for serving students with IEPs.
- Contracting with entities to provide effective services to students when necessary.
- Completing annual IEP meetings on time.
- Having been subject to no investigations related to special needs students that resulted in findings.
- Having no findings related to special education funding on annual financial audit.
- Providing staff with appropriate training.

3.11 (if applicable) Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to the delivery of a quality Prekindergarten instructional program. This includes:
- Ensuring Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening is completed.
- Securing appropriate staffing.
- Supplying relevant professional development to all staff.
- Implementing culturally responsive comprehensive child assessment/s.
- Utilizing the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPs).
- Supporting an effective transition to Kindergarten.
- Refer students to community-based resources as needed.

3.15 Does the school generally retain its students from October 1st through the close of the school year?

3.16 Does the school exhibit a high level of parent satisfaction as measured by the following?
- The percentage of parents surveyed who "agree" or "strongly agree" that they would recommend the school to a friend.
- Survey response rate

3.17 Is the school's physical plant safe and conducive to learning?
- Providing adequate security.
- Meeting health and safety code requirements.
- Providing accessibility for all students.
- Ensuring the facility, furniture and equipment is clean and well-maintained.
- Providing appropriate sized spaces for enrollment and student-teacher ratios.
- Layout and design meet the academic and social needs of students, teachers, staff, families and the community.

3.18 Does the school have systems and structures in place to effectively identify and support students needing academic and/or behavioral supports in a timely fashion? This includes:
- A clear process to identify students needing support, understood and implemented consistently.
- A robust system of tiered supports.

- Timely execution of these supports.
- Use of data to evaluate the effectiveness of supports and the system.
- Effective communication between stakeholders (teachers, school staff, families, and students).

3.19 There are opportunities and structures in place for families to engage in their child's education that include the following:
- Processes to communicate academic performance and other pertinent school information that are accessible to families including the consideration of language needs (e.g. conferences).
- Processes to elicit feedback from families are accessible and seek to reach the broader school community including consideration of language needs. Feedback processes include but are not limited to an annual survey.
- Opportunities for parents/guardians to support their child's education and/or the school (e.g volunteering, parent organization, family events).

3.20 Is the school committed to creating a welcoming, inclusive, and equitable environment that is open to all students? This is evidenced by the following:
- Marketing/outreach targets socioeconomically and racially diverse populations, which includes having materials available in multiple languages.
- Enrollment policies and practices are accessible and transparent. Supports are available to families as needed to navigate the application and enrollment process.
- The school demonstrates a commitment to cultivating a Board and staff that is reflective of the student population.

## Site Visit Report

As noted, MSVs and RSVs align with the St. Thomas' Evaluation Framework. The tools used are focused to collect evidence to answer the three key questions: Is the academic program a success?, Is the school financially viable?, and is the organization effective and well-run? The site visit report is organized by indicator type and articulates 2-3 findings for every indicator from the site visit. Site visit reports are shared with the School Leader and Board within 5 business days following the site visit.

*Please note: If any serious issue arises from a site visit, St. Thomas may investigate the issue more closely and it may lead to an intervention from the "Range of Interventions" table. If this occurs, St. Thomas will follow the process outlined in the Interventions section of the handbook.*

# Classroom Observation Form

| **UST Site Visit Observation Form** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Date:* | | *Observer Name:* | |
| *School* | | *Room #* | |
| *Subject* | | *Grade* | |
| *# of students* | | *# of adults* | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Engagement @ entry** | # actively engaged<br><br># disengaged | |
| **Objective:** | | |
| **Lesson Content:** | | |
| **Safe and Clean Classroom?**<br><br>*(3.19)* | | |
| **Engagement @ 5mins** | # actively engaged<br><br># disengaged | |
| **Teacher:Student Exchanges**<br><br>*(3.20)* | ● Positive<br>● Benign<br>● Negative<br>● Not observed | |
| **Student:Student Exchanges**<br><br>*(3.20)* | ● Positive<br>● Benign<br>● Negative<br>● Not observed | |
| **Behavior Policy**<br><br>*(3.20)* | ● Observed<br>● Not observed | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Engagement @ 10mins** | # actively engaged<br><br>### disengaged | |
| **MIssion/Vision**<br>*(1.14)* | ● Observed<br>● Not observed | |
| **EL observations**<br>*(3.9)* | ● Observed<br>● Not observed | |
| **SPED observations**<br>*(3.10)* | ● Observed<br>● Not observed | |
| **Engagement @ 15mins** | # actively engaged<br><br>### disengaged | |

# Board Meeting Observation Feedback Form
Insert School

| Date: | Observer: | Meeting Type: | Regular | Special | Emergency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Start Time: | End Time: | (3.19) **Staff/Public In Attendance (including ex. officio members)** | | | |
| **Board Members in Attendance** | | | | | |

**Responses are: Yes** – There is clear evidence that the indicator exists. **Emerging (EM)** - There is some evidence of the indicator, but improvement is recommended. **No** –The indicator was not observed. **N/A** - The indicator was not observed at this meeting, but over the course of year it is expected to be.

| Compliance Indicators | Observed | | | | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Open Meeting Law (violations result in written infraction)* | Yes | EM | No | N/A | |
| (3.2) Meeting is open to the public (Board meeting time and location are published). | | | | | |
| (3.2) One set of printed materials relating to the agenda is available for public inspection. | | | | | |
| (3.2) Meeting is conducted only with a quorum present. | | | | | |
| (3.2) Meeting is not conducted with interactive technology unless it meets MN Stat 13D.02 conditions. | | | | | |
| (3.2) If a special/emergency meeting, it is conducted in accordance with MN Stat13D. | | | | | |
| (3.2) If closed, meeting is closed in accordance with MN Stat 13D. | | | | | |
| (3.2) Votes are recorded and made accessible in accordance with MN Stat 13D. | | | | | |
| (3.7) Meeting is conducted in accordance with the Board's bylaws. | | | | | |
| **Continuous Improvement Indicators** | **Observed** | | | | **Comments** |
| *Board Meeting Organization* | Yes | EM | No | N/A | |
| Meeting is called to order on time. | | | | | |
| An adopted agenda is followed after Board approval. | | | | | |
| Appropriate materials are available to accompany agenda items. | | | | | |
| An orderly methodology guides the running of the meeting (e.g. Roberts Rules). | | | | | |
| *Board Meeting Culture* | Yes | EM | No | N/A | . |
| Board members are on time. | | | | | |
| Board member conduct and meeting minutes are professional. | | | | | |
| Board members receive materials 3-5 days in advance and appear prepared. | | | | | |

| Continuous Improvement Indicators *continued...* | Observed | | | | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Board Agenda** | Yes | EM | No | N/A | |
| (3.2) Agenda is posted ahead, for example on the web or wall. | | | | | |
| (3.2) If used, a consent agenda is properly executed. | | | | | |
| (3.2) The Board adequately addresses conflict of interest. | | | | | |
| (3.2) The agenda contains an item(s) on student performance and activity. | | | | | |
| (2.1) The agenda contains an item(s) on finance. | | | | | |
| (2.4) Finance reports tie pupil units budgeted to actuals. | | | | | |
| (2.4) Finance reports include register, balance sheet, rev/exp, and cash flow. | | | | | |
| (3.2) The agenda addresses general operations concerns without micromanaging. | | | | | |
| (3.19) The Board provides an opportunity for public input. | | | | | |
| **Board Capacity** | Yes | EM | No | N/A | |
| (3.17) (3.2) The mission and vision guide decision making. | | | | | |
| (3.6) The Board references strategic (and/or improvement) plan and goals to monitor effectiveness (new schools- readiness to open checklist) | | | | | |
| (3.2) Committee reports are thorough and understandable. | | | | | |
| (3.7) The Board develops and reviews use of policies. | | | | | |
| (3.6) The agenda contains information to evaluate the building leadership. | | | | | |
| (3.1) The Board evidences continuous improvement (and monitors Board development on an ongoing basis. | | | | | |

## Additional Feedback

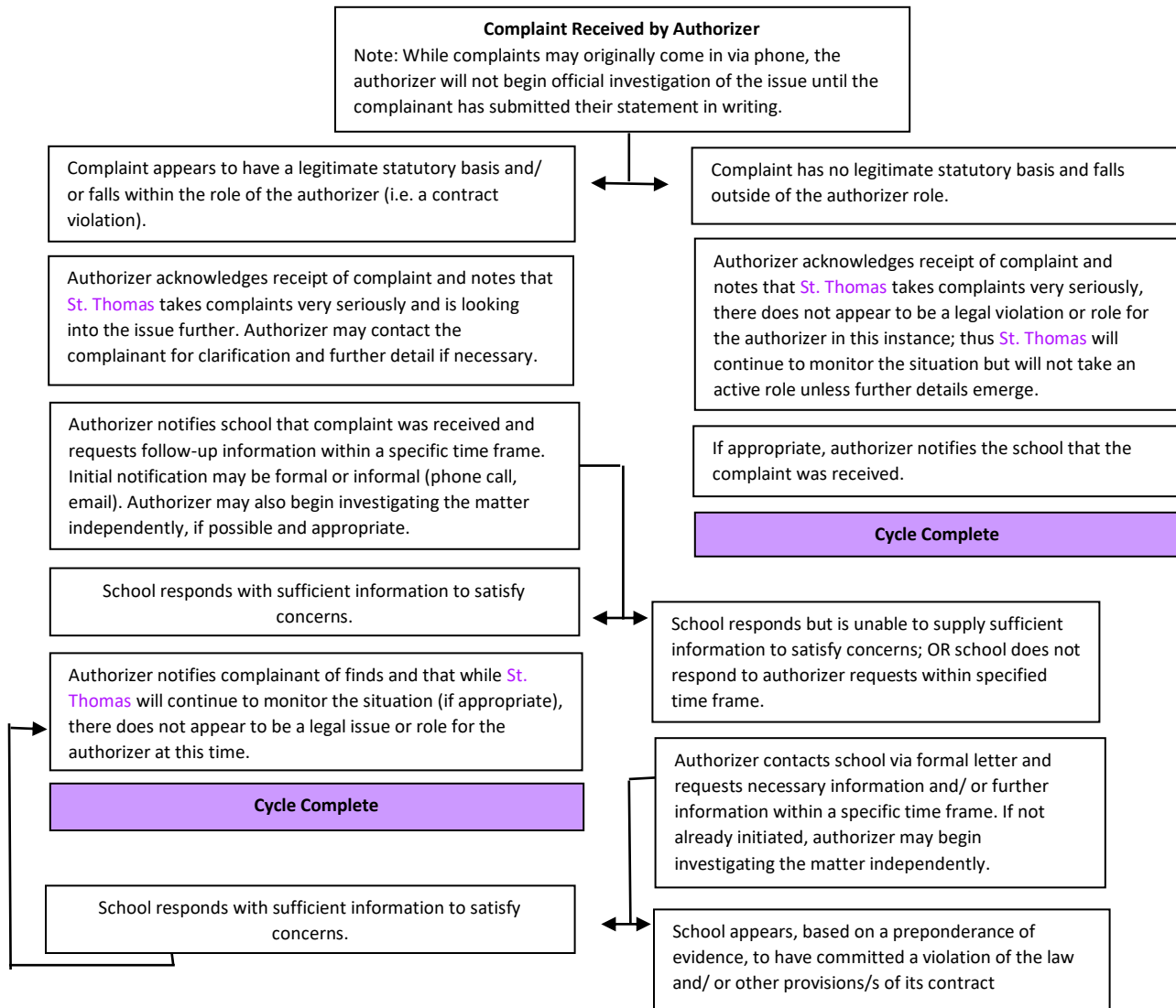**Notes, Observations and Questions:**

# Range of Interventions Guidelines

St. Thomas evaluates all the information it obtains through its ongoing oversight to inform decision-making. School's performance and/or actions may trigger an intervention. The chart below describes what triggers different levels of intervention and the ensuing result. <u>Official interventions require a response from the school's Board of Directors.</u> Intervention level is determined by the severity of the concern and need not begin with level one or advance level-by-level.

| Status | Triggered by… | Will Result in…. |
|---|---|---|
| ***Level One***<br><br>Notice of Concern | • Signs of weak performance identified through routine monitoring; through implementation, compliance, or performance reviews; or by other means.<br>• Repeated failure to submit required documents on a timely basis. | • Letter to the school's Board (council) detailing areas of concern.<br>• Review and reconsideration of goals and performance targets in the Accountability Plan.<br>• St. Thomas Charter School Accountability Board recommendation that the school develops a School Improvement Plan (SIP). |
| ***Level Two***<br><br>Notice of Deficiency | • Failure to meet multiple performance targets; or glaring or repeated failure to meet a single performance target.<br>• Failure to comply with applicable law or significant failure to comply with Board condition(s) of the charter. | • Letter to the school's Board (council) detailing areas of deficiency.<br>• SIP containing specific improvement objectives, technical assistance requirements, and schedule for remedial action negotiated with the St. Thomas Charter School Accountability Board. |
| ***Level Three***<br><br>Notice of Probationary Status | • Continued failure to meet performance targets; and failure to meet objectives of SIP.<br>• Continued failure to comply with applicable law or with the charter. | • SIP imposed by the St. Thomas Charter Accountability Board.<br>• Charter School Board is copied on all communication regarding the SIP and intervention.<br>• St. Thomas Charter School Accountability Board has the option to request the school allocate time at one or more school Board meetings for a St. Thomas team member to present and discuss SIP progress.<br>• St. Thomas Charter School Accountability Board has the option to require the assignment of a technical assistance team to the charter school and may facilitate the development of said technical assistance team.<br>• In certain cases, the St. Thomas Charter School Accountability Board may appoint an agent to monitor the implementation of the SIP and the activities of the technical assistance team. |
| ***Level Four***<br><br>Charter Extended Review | • Pattern of failure to comply or meet performance targets; or<br>• Failure to successfully address terms of probation. | • Recommendation to revoke, not to revoke, or to impose lesser sanctions.<br>• Decision to commence or not to commence revocation proceedings made by St. Thomas Charter School Accountability Board. |

| *__Level Five__*<br><br>Charter<br>Revocation | • Charter review results in recommendation to revoke. | • Written notice from the St. Thomas Charter School Accountability Board stating reasons for proposed revocation and informing school of right to an informal hearing.<br>• Record of informal hearing.<br>• Decision to revoke or not to revoke made by St. Thomas Charter School Accountability Board. |
| --- | --- | --- |

# Complaint Process

**Complaint Received by Authorizer**
Note: While complaints may originally come in via phone, the authorizer will not begin official investigation of the issue until the complainant has submitted their statement in writing.

Complaint appears to have a legitimate statutory basis and/ or falls within the role of the authorizer (i.e. a contract violation).

Complaint has no legitimate statutory basis and falls outside of the authorizer role.

Authorizer acknowledges receipt of complaint and notes that St. Thomas takes complaints very seriously and is looking into the issue further. Authorizer may contact the complainant for clarification and further detail if necessary.

Authorizer acknowledges receipt of complaint and notes that St. Thomas takes complaints very seriously, there does not appear to be a legal violation or role for the authorizer in this instance; thus St. Thomas will continue to monitor the situation but will not take an active role unless further details emerge.

Authorizer notifies school that complaint was received and requests follow-up information within a specific time frame. Initial notification may be formal or informal (phone call, email). Authorizer may also begin investigating the matter independently, if possible and appropriate.

If appropriate, authorizer notifies the school that the complaint was received.

**Cycle Complete**

School responds with sufficient information to satisfy concerns.

School responds but is unable to supply sufficient information to satisfy concerns; OR school does not respond to authorizer requests within specified time frame.

Authorizer notifies complainant of finds and that while St. Thomas will continue to monitor the situation (if appropriate), there does not appear to be a legal issue or role for the authorizer at this time.

Authorizer contacts school via formal letter and requests necessary information and/ or further information within a specific time frame. If not already initiated, authorizer may begin investigating the matter independently.

**Cycle Complete**

School responds with sufficient information to satisfy concerns.

School appears, based on a preponderance of evidence, to have committed a violation of the law and/ or other provisions/s of its contract

Authorizer response when a violation is discovered will vary based on the nature and severity of the issue. In general, upon finding a school out of compliance with legal or contractual requirements, the authorizer will issue a report to the school's board and leadership detailing its findings and may:

- Require that the school submit a plan detailing how it will come into and remain in compliance within a specified time frame.
- Place the school on intervention.
- Notify the Minnesota Department of Education of the violation.

In accordance with charter law and its contracts with schools, the University of St. Thomas also reserves the right to revoke a school's charter if sufficient cause exists.

# XIV. School Closure Plan

The Charter School Board (the Board) is responsible for ensuring the School is closed in an orderly fashion according to Applicable Law. The Board's closure duties include ensuring proper financial dissolution under MN Law Chapter 317A. The Board shall provide the University of St. Thomas (UST) with verification of completion of the items listed below. For the purposes of effectively closing the School, the date of charter revocation is the last date of the contract for non-renewals and the date of revocation established in the notice of termination for charter terminations. In the case of a voluntary termination this date will be established by the authorizer pursuant to the date the authorizer receives notice of the Board's intent to turn over its charter.

The role of the authorizer in a closure process is to promptly notify the commissioner and resident district of the closure, and to monitor the closure proceedings undertaken by the Board to the extent possible.

| Item | Description of Required Actions | School's Responsible Party | Completion Date | Status | |
|------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|--------|---|
| **Immediate Board Actions** | | | | | |
| **1** | **Establish *ad hoc* School Board Committee for wind-up / restructuring**<br><br>❑ Designate School contact person(s) to send and receive communications from the UST;<br>❑ Designate employees or School Board members who will handle various aspects of winding up of School operations; and<br>❑ Provide contact information and list of employees / School Board members and correspondent responsibilities to the UST.<br>❑ Instruct contact persons to heed notification requirements for time sensitive notifications, if any. | | | | |

| Item | Description of Required Actions | School's Responsible Party | Completion Date | Status | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | Reserve Funds -Segregate by School Board resolution in a separate checking account up to $50,000 in funds to be used for legal, accounting and other expenses to execute this Closure Plan and to dissolve the School Corporation. | | | | |
| | **Notifications and Further Actions** | | | | |

| Item | Description of Required Actions | School's Responsible Party | Completion Date | Status | |
|------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|--------|---|
| 3 | **Notification of Parents / Guardians**<br><br>Within 10 days after charter revocation, notify parents / guardians and employees of school regarding the closure of the School, if such notification has not yet been made.  Such notification shall include, but not be limited to, the following:<br><br>❑ Date of the last day of regular instruction;<br>❑ cancellation of any planned summer school;<br>❑ notice to parents that enrollment of children in their district of residence or other school is mandatory under state law for children that are six years of age or older;<br>❑ inclusion of a listing of the names of charter, parochial, public and private schools in the area;<br>❑ indicate how transfer of student records will be handled and offer of copies of student records before the CHARTER REVOCATION;<br>❑ indicate how the school will provide information and assistance to families that will help them to enroll their students in another school.<br>❑ Provide the UST with a copy of the notice. | | | | |
| **Item** | **Description of Required Actions** | **School's Responsible Party** | **Completion Date** | **Status** | |
| 4 | **Final Report Cards and Student Records Notice**<br>Within 7 days after CHARTER REVOCATION, provide parents / guardians with copies of final report cards and notice of where student records will be sent (the school district of the School's location) and specific contact information. | | | | |

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| | ❑ The notice must advise the parent/guardian to contact the school where the student intends to enroll and to have the student's new school contact the School's district of location to have the student's educational records transferred to the new school.<br>❑ Provide the UST with a copy of the notice. | | | | |
| **5** | **Transfer of Student Records and Testing Material**<br><br>No later than 10 days after CHARTER REVOCATION send student records to the School's district of residence, including:<br><br>❑ Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and all records regarding special education and supplemental services;<br>❑ student health / immunization records;<br>❑ attendance records; and<br>❑ all other student records.<br><br>All end of school year grades and evaluations must be completed and made part of the student records, including any IEP / Committee on Special Education meetings / progress reports.<br><br>As noted above, parents / guardians should be offered copies of students' records before CHARTER REVOCATION.<br><br>Testing material, including scores, test booklets, and annual data files etc. required to be maintained by the School by the State Education Department must also be forwarded to the School's district of location.<br><br>❑ To the extent that scores, etc. will come into existence after the CHARTER REVOCATION,arrangements should be made with the testing agent to forward such material to the district of location. The school should also send a set of Individual Student Reports to resident district and parents. | | | | 5 |

| Item | Description of Required Actions | School's Responsible Party | Completion Date | Status |
|------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|--------|
| 6 | **Notification of School Districts**<br><br>Within 7 days after the charter revocation, the School must notify school district(s) of students' residence regarding the termination of the education program and lack of future enrollment.<br><br>❑ If applicable, notification regarding the cessation of food and transportation services should be provided.<br>❑ Provide notice to the districts that arrangements should be made to pick up any district property; e.g., borrowed books, nursing equipment.<br>❑ Provide UST with a copy of the notice. | | | |
| 7 | **Notification of Funding Sources / Charitable Partners**<br><br>Within 7 days after CHARTER REVOCATION, all other sources of the School's operational funding must be notified in writing of the closure of the School as well as charitable partners of the School.<br><br>❑ The School should not accept further loans from management companies, etc., nor otherwise incur additional liability.  However, it may continue to accept gifts from charitable partners as long as the charity is aware of the School's closure / restructuring status.<br>❑ Charities with property on the premises of the School should be notified to remove same as soon as possible or after CHARTER REVOCATION, whichever is appropriate. | | | |
| Item | Description of Required Actions | School's Responsible Party | Completion Date | Status |

| Item | Description of Required Actions | School's Responsible Party | Completion Date | Status | |
|------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|--------|---|
| **8** | **Notification of Contractors and Termination of Contracts**<br><br>Within 20 days after charter revocation, formulate a list of all contractors with contracts in effect, and notify them regarding cessation of current school operations at CHARTER REVOCATION.<br><br>❑ If applicable, instruct contractors to make arrangements to remove any contractor property from the School facility by a date certain, e.g., copying machines, water coolers, other rented property.<br>❑ Provide the UST with a copy of such notice.<br>❑ Retain records of past contracts with proof that they were fully paid (*see* Records Retention, below) to prevent spurious claims.<br><br>As appropriate, and to the extent possible, terminate contracts for goods and services as of the last date such goods or services will be needed to the extent not necessary for the educational program or wind-up of the School.<br><br>❑ Telephone, gas, electric, water, insurance (premises and D&O insurance, *see* below) should remain operative through the CHARTER REVOCATION and to the extent necessary to wind up the School'saffairs beyond that time. | | | | |

| Item | Description of Required Actions | School's Responsible Party | Completion Date | Status | |
|------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|--------|---|
| 9 | **Notification of Employees and Benefit Providers**<br><br>After an employee termination date is established, but in no event later than 60 days before CHARTER REVOCATION, notify all employees of termination of employment and/or contracts, and notify benefit providers of pending termination of all employees.  Further notify employees and providers of termination of all benefit programs, and, if allowable, terminate all programs as of the last date of service in accordance with applicable law and regulations (i.e. COBRA), including:<br><br>❑  health care / health insurance;<br>❑  life insurance;<br>❑  dental plans;<br>❑  eyeglass plans;<br>❑  cafeteria plans;<br>❑  401(k), retirement plans; and<br>❑  pension plans.<br>❑  TRA<br>❑  PERA<br>Specific rules and regulations may apply to such programs especially teacher's retirement plans, so legal counsel should be consulted.<br><br>Employees should be notified of eligibility for unemployment compensation.  (In the event the School has not paid into the unemployment program on an ongoing basis, the School may have significant financial liability on an ongoing basis after the CHARTER REVOCATION, and reserve funds should be set aside for this purpose.)  *See* School Wind-Up Plan and Action regarding payment of taxes, below. | | | | |

| 10 | **Notification of Food and Transportation Services and Cancellation of Contracts**<br><br>Within 20 days after the charter revocation, or earlier if required by the contractual notice requirements, cancel school district or private food and/or transportation services for summer school and next school year. | | | | |
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| Item | Description of Required Actions | School's Responsible Party | Completion Date | Status | |
|------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|--------|---|
| 11 | **Notification of UST Regarding Lawsuits**<br><br>As soon as possible after receiving notice and/or service of process regarding litigation against, or initiated by, the School, School Board or School employees, notify the UST and provide copies of legal papers received.<br><br>The School has an ongoing obligation to keep the UST informed regarding such litigation, including bankruptcy, whether voluntary or involuntary, and to provide copies of all filings. | | | | |
| **Assets, Creditors and Debtors** | | | | | |
| 12 | **List of Creditors and Debtors; UCC Search**<br><br>Within twenty days after the charter revocation, formulate list of creditors and debtors and any amounts accrued and unpaid with respect to such creditor or debtor.<br><br>❑ This list is not the same as the contractor list, above, but may include contractors, which should be listed.<br>❑ Creditors include lenders, mortgage holders, bond holders, equipment suppliers, service providers, and secured and unsecured creditors. Security interests may be recorded and filed pursuant to the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) with the county and State of Minnesota, and may include all of the assets of the School Corporation or specific assets in which a creditor has an interest as long as such debt remains outstanding.<br>❑ A UCC search should be performed by the School to determine if there are any secured creditors and to what assets security interests are attached. | | | | |

| | Debtors include persons who owe the school fees or credits, lessees or sub-lessees of the School, and any person holding property of the School. | | | |
| | ❑ Provide a copy of the list of creditors to the UST with the amount owed to each creditor thereon and the amount owed by each debtor. | | | |

| Item | Description of Required Actions | School's Responsible Party | Completion Date | Status | |
|------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|--------|---|
| 13 | **Notification to Creditors**<br><br>Within thirty days after the charter revocation, the School must notify all creditors of its closure.<br><br>The School should solicit from each creditor a final accounting of the School's accrued and unpaid debt owed to such creditor. This figure should be compared to the School's calculation of the debt and be reconciled between the parties.<br><br>To the extent possible, the School should also begin to negotiate a settlement of debts, which is ultimately consummated by a settlement agreement reflecting satisfaction and release of the existing obligations, if possible. | | | | |
| 14 | **Notification to Debtors**<br><br>Within thirty days after the charter revocation, the School must contact all debtors and demand payment. To the extent collection efforts are unsuccessful, the School may turn the debt over to commercial debt collection agencies. All records regarding such collection or disputes by debtors regarding amounts owed must be retained. | | | | |

| Item | Description of Required Actions | School's Responsible Party | Completion Date | Status | |
|------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|--------|---|
| **15** | **School Wind-Up Plan and Action**<br><br>The School Corporation shall collect debts, dispose of assets and negotiate with and pay creditors in an orderly fashion in accordance with a timetable and plan adopted by the School's board of directors.  Priority should be given to continuing the School's educational program through the end of the school year and retaining funds to complete the wind-up process.<br><br>❑ The initial plan should be adopted within 20 days of charter revocation and be updated at least bi-weekly with copies to the UST.  The plan should include, but not be limited to, the following.<br>❑ Termination of non-essential personnel and cancellation of non-essential services prior to CHARTER REVOCATION.<br>❑ Make final federal, state and local tax payments (every employer, including the School, which pays wages to employees is responsible for withholding, depositing, paying, and reporting federal, state and local income tax, social security taxes, and federal unemployment tax for such wage payments).<br>❑ Auction / sale of assets in a manner that avoids conflicts of interest and maximizes net revenue to the extent permitted by ongoing agreements with existing creditors. (*See* Liquidation of Assets, below.)<br>❑ Liquidation or closing of bank accounts according to a schedule that minimizes fees but leaves the School enough flexibility to pay creditors, attorneys, accountants, etc. during the course of the wind-up, including funds for a final audit, and (if the School Corporation does not submit or the board of directors do not approve a renewal application), for dissolution.<br>❑ Cancellation of corporate credit cards and lines of credit. | | | | |

| Item | Description of Required Actions | School's Responsible Party | Completion Date | Status | |
|------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|--------|---|
| | ❑ Change authorized signatures on accounts as needed to reflect changes in persons authorized to implement the winding down operations of the School Corporation, and employment, contract and School Board status of those authorized to sign for the School. <br> ❑ Status reports on the implementation of the School Wind-Up Plan to be submitted to the UST through Interim Statements and a Final Statement (below). | | | | |
| 16 | **Protection of Assets; Insurance** <br><br> The School's assets and any assets in the School that belong to others must be protected against theft, misappropriation, and deterioration. <br><br> ❑ Existing insurance coverage should be maintained on the assets until the disposal of such assets. In accordance with the Wind-Up Plan. <br> ❑ Continue existing insurance for School Facility, vehicles and other assets until 1) disposal or transfer of real estate or termination of lease, and 2) disposal; transfer or sale of vehicles and other assets are sold, respectively. <br> ❑ Negotiate School Facility insurance with entities that may take possession of School Facility – lenders, mortgagors; bond holders, etc., if possible. <br> ❑ Appropriate security services should be obtained or maintained. <br> ❑ Action may include moving assets to secure storage after closure or loss of the School Facility. | | | | |

| Item | Description of Required Actions | School's Responsible Party | Completion Date | Status | |
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| **17** | **Inventory**<br><br>No later than 30 days prior to CHARTER REVOCATION, <u>all</u> of the School's assets must be inventoried with item #'s and quantities and/or its inventory updated.<br><br>❑ All assets of the School, not just ones over a certain dollar value, must be inventoried.<br>❑ Provide UST with a copy of the inventory.<br>❑ Identify assets belonging to other entities (school district, county, municipality, health department, Authorizing foundation, vendors, PTA, etc.), including those borrowed or loaned.<br>❑ Identify assets encumbered by the terms of a contingent gift, grant or donation, or a security interest.<br>❑ Return assets not belonging to School and document same. | | | | |

| Item | Description of Required Actions | School's Responsible Party | Completion Date | Status |
|------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|--------|
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| 18 | **Liquidation of Assets**

Assets must be liquidated in a commercially reasonable manner in accordance with Department of Education expectations including, but not limited to, sale by way of auction, sealed bidding or other commercially reasonable sales methods to the extent permitted under agreements with existing creditors and to the extent such assets are free and clear of any liens or encumbrances.  If an asset is subject to a lien, encumbrance or security interest (above), the secured party should be contacted.

❑ Pursuant to MN Statute 317A.735, no asset may be given away, except as authorized by law.  In cases where the cost of disposing of an asset will exceed the cost to be received at sale or auction, it may be permissible to give away or discard such assets.  However, this should be cleared from the largest or sole creditor(s) in advance.

School Board members and their relatives as well as employees and students of the School should not purchase any asset unless the purchase is disclosed to the School Board and the disclosure is made a matter of record in the School Board's minutes and approved by a majority of the non-interested members of the School Board. | | | | |

| Item | Description of Required Actions | School's Responsible Party | Completion Date | Status | |
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| **19** | **D&O Insurance**<br><br>Maintain existing directors and officers liability (D&O) insurance, if any, until final dissolution of the School Corporation.  If no such D&O insurance exists, disclose this fact to the board of directors. | | | | |

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| **20** | **Interim Statements**<br><br>No later than 10 days after CHARTER REVOCATION, prepare, and submit to the UST, an interim statement in a form satisfactory to the UST, of the status of all contracts and other obligations of the School Corporation, and all funds, including principal and accrued interest, owed to, and by, the School Corporation, with supporting evidence showing:<br><br>❑ all creditors or former creditors, any amounts paid to creditors (or in-kind exchanges of assets), and any amounts of debt of the School or School Corporation outstanding, including principal and accruedinterest, as of the date of the interim report; and<br>❑ all amounts owed to the School Corporation by debtors, any amounts paid by debtors, and whether any debtors have paid in full, and any amounts outstanding; and<br>❑ all income generated through sale or auction of assets and any other change in status of assets.<br><br>The School will prepare and submit such statements to the UST at 30-day intervals until the final statement (below) is prepared and submitted. | | | |

| Item | Description of Required Actions | School's Responsible Party | Completion Date | Status | |
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| 21 | **Final Statement**<br><br>At a date to be determined by the UST, anticipated to be no later than 90 days after CHARTER REVOCATION, no later than 10 days prior to the filing of a dissolution proceeding, the School shall prepare to the full satisfaction of the UST a final statement of the status of all contracts and other obligations of the School Corporation, and all funds owed to the School, audited (or confirmed) by an independent accountant, with supporting evidence showing:<br><br>❑ all assets and the value and location thereof, whether such asset has been distributed to creditors in satisfaction or payment of any existing debt obligation; and<br>❑ each remaining creditor and any and all amounts owed to each creditor, including principal and accrued interest through the date of such statement; and<br>❑ statement that (a) all debts have been collected, or (b) that good faith efforts have been made to collect same, and<br>❑ each remaining debtor of the School or School Corporation and the amounts owed by each debtor, including principal and accrued interest.<br>❑ This statement is submitted to the UST in the form in which it will be sworn and submitted to the MN Attorney General and/or MN Secretary of State as part of any dissolution proceeding.<br>❑ This statement is in addition to the final Financial Statement Audit (below). | | | | |
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| Item | Description of Required Actions | School's Responsible Party | Completion Date | Status | |
|------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|--------|---|
| **Corporate Records / Accounting** | | | | | |
| 22 | **Final Financial Statement Audit**<br><br>The School must have a financial statement audit performed in accordance with the Charter and the Act no later than November 1<sup>st</sup> of the calendar year in which the School ceases instruction. | | | | |
| 23 | **Closeout of State and Federal Grants**<br><br>State, federal and other grants must be closed out, including:<br><br>❑ notification to the grant entity of the School closure; and<br>❑ filing of any required expenditure reports or receipts and any required program reports.<br><br>The School Corporation should continue to pursue grant funds to which it is entitled, provided that it fully discloses its current situation and intentions with respect to closure. The School Corporation should not seek or accept grant funds for future school years when the School will be closed. Grant status should be noted on financial statements. | | | | |
| 24 | **U.S. Dept. of Education Filings**<br><br>File Federal form 269 or 269a if the School was receiving funds directly from the United States Department of Education. *See* 34 CFR 80.41. | | | | |

| Item | Description of Required Actions | School's Responsible Party | Completion Date | Status | |
|------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|--------|--|
| 25 | **IRS Status; Reports**<br><br>The School Board must continue to take all steps necessary to maintain its 501(c)(3) status, including, but not limited to, the following:<br><br>❑ notification to IRS regarding any address change of the School Corporation; and<br>❑ filing of required tax returns or reports (e.g., IRS form 990 and Schedule A).<br>❑ If the School Corporation proceeds to dissolution, notify the IRS of dissolution of the education corporation and its 501(c)(3) status and furnish a copy to the UST. | | | | |
| 26 | **Corporate Records**<br><br>In all cases, the School Board shall maintain all corporate records related to:<br><br>❑ Loans, bonds, mortgages and other financing;<br>❑ Contracts;<br>❑ Leases;<br>❑ Assets and asset sales;<br>❑ Grants -- records relating to federal grants must be kept in accordance with 34 CFR 8042.<br>❑ Governance (Minutes, by-laws, policies);<br>❑ Employees (background checks, personnel files);<br>❑ Accounting/audit, taxes and tax status, etc;<br>❑ Personnel,<br>❑ Employee benefit programs and benefits; and<br>❑ Student summary test data files<br>❑ Any items listed in this Closure Plan. | | | | |

| | | School's Responsible Party | Completion Date | Status | |
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| | In the event the School Corporation is dissolved, any and all records not previously sent to the school district of the School's location should be sent to that school district. | | | | |

| Item | Description of Required Actions | School's Responsible Party | Completion Date | Status | |
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| **Dissolution / Final Distribution of Assets** | | | | | |
| 27 | **Resolution of Dissolution**<br><br>The School Board must adopt a resolution that the School Corporation be dissolved and proceed to file the same with the MN Attorney General and/or MN Secretary of State. | | | | |
| 28 | **Dissolution**<br><br>If the School Corporation dissolves, the School Board must follow the dissolution provisions in its articles of incorporation and applicable laws.  This may include:<br><br>❑ a complete statement of all assets, their location and an estimate of their value; and<br>❑ a statement of the ascertainable debts of the education corporation.<br><br>Whenever the Charter or an order of dissolution is made, the members of the School Board or other custodian of the records of the School have the duty to properly maintain the permanent records of the School according to law and stored in a secure, locked container.<br><br>Copies of all papers related to dissolution should be sent to the UST.<br><br>Members of the School Board are empowered to continue in office even after the expiration of the Charter and dissolution | | | | |

| Item | Description of Required Actions | School's Responsible Party | Completion Date | Status | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | of the School Corporation for the purpose of winding-up and settling the affairs of the School Corporation, and after the dissolution of the School Corporation. | | | | |
| **29** | **Final Distribution of Assets**<br><br>All liabilities and obligations of the School must be paid and discharged (or adequate provision must be made therefore) to the extent of the School's assets. Any assets held subject to a lien, encumbrance, security interest or other written conditions or limitations must be disposed of in accordance with and subject to those conditions or limitations.<br><br>Assets received and held by the School subject to limitations permitting their use only for charitable, benevolent, educational, or similar purposes, but not held upon condition requiring return or with specific disposition instructions, shall be held until dissolution and transferred or conveyed to one or more charter schools in the school district or to the school district.<br><br>❑ An itemized receipt must be obtained from each recipient of an asset containing the name, address and telephone number of the recipient. (In case of later question, audit or review by federal bankruptcy or state supreme court, or other governmental body.)<br>❑ In closing out any federal grant and accounting for any federal grant funds, property owned by the federal government or property acquired under a federal grant must be distributed in accordance with federal regulations. | | | | |