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CHARTER SCHOOL
MANUAL

Handbook Drafted Spring 2017 by the Charter School Authorization Team

Chisago Lakes recognizes and kindly gives credit to the following organizations for the use of materials or assistance in creating this handbook:

- National Association Charter School Authorizers
- Minnesota Association of Charter Schools
- Minnesota Department of Education
- Audubon Center of the North Woods
- Bethel University

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CHISAGO LAKES SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Chisago Lakes School District unites five historical communities with a tradition of excellence. Each community offers both a unique history and a contemporary charm of its own. The 165 square-mile district is home to a little over 3,400 students (preK-12) and their families. There are three elementary schools, one middle school, one high school, and a charter school. The school district is proud of its tradition of excellence in academics, fine arts, community education and extracurricular activities. District test scores in reading and math are well in excess of the state averages, and are the best in the local area, as reported in the *Star Tribune*.

The Chisago Lakes School District is also a charter school authorizer. We currently authorize one school, [TRIO Wolf Creek Distance Learning Charter School](#) located in Chisago City, Minnesota.

Mission

To provide an educational opportunity within the borders of the Chisago Lakes School District that offers students unique, high quality, and personalized educational opportunities that are not inherently found in the Chisago Lakes School District offerings.

The Chisago Lakes School District's charter school mission is in accordance with Minnesota Statute 124E.01 (2016) Charter Schools, which states:

"The primary purpose of charter schools is to improve all pupil learning and all student achievement.

Additional purposes include to:

1. increase learning opportunities for all pupils;
2. encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
3. measure learning outcomes and create different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes;
4. establish new forms of accountability for schools; or
5. create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site."

Vision

To authorize high-quality charter schools dedicated to increasing student achievement through unique, high quality and personalized educational opportunities.

Organizational Goals

1. Increase School Performance
2. Encourage Innovative and Personalized Teaching Methods
3. Measure Learning Outcomes as Aligned with the World's Best Workforce
4. Maintain quality of portfolio

Organizational goals will be revisited and analyzed annually by the Charter School Authorization Team. To measure the success of our organizational goals, we will be analyzing our [Annual Assessment Rubric](#) on the following measures: A.1, A.2, A.3 (Goal #2), A.4, A.5, A.6 (Goal #1), A.7, A.8, A.9 (Goal #3). For Goal #4, we will measure the ratio of charter schools in levels "Authorized" versus any "Level of Concern." If we authorize more than one charter school, data will be aggregated across the portfolio.

World's Best Workforce

Minnesota Statutes 124E.10, subdivision 1, related to charter school contracts was amended to include WBWF outcomes. A charter school must design its program to at least meet the outcomes adopted by the commissioner for public school students, including the WBWF goals under section 120B.11, subdivision 1.

Chisago Lakes adheres to Minnesota Statute 120B.11 School District Process for Reviewing Curriculum, Instruction, and Student Achievement; Striving for the World's Best Workforce.

(a) "Instruction" means methods of providing learning experiences that enable a student to meet state and district academic standards and graduation requirements including applied and experiential learning.

(b) "Curriculum" means district or school adopted programs and written plans for providing students with learning experiences that lead to expected knowledge and skills and career and college readiness.

(c) "World's best workforce" means striving to: meet school readiness goals; have all third grade students achieve grade-level literacy; close the academic achievement gap among all racial and ethnic groups of students and between students living in poverty and students not living in poverty; have all students attain career and college readiness before graduating from high school; and have all students graduate from high school.

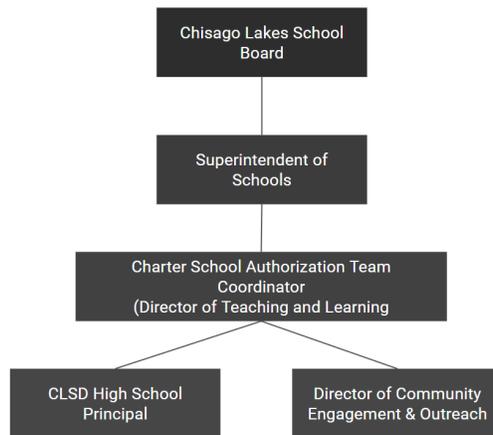
(d) "Experiential learning" means learning for students that includes career exploration through a specific class or course or through work-based experiences such as job shadowing, mentoring, entrepreneurship, service learning, volunteering, internships, other cooperative work experience, youth apprenticeship, or employment.

Organization and Capacity

Chisago Lakes is committed to supporting charter schools in Minnesota through its authorizing efforts. The Education department demonstrates this commitment through the Charter School Authorization Team, financial resources, and best practices.

The Charter School Authorization Team

The Chisago Lakes Charter School Authorization Team is made up of four full members. The four members work together to ensure success of the charter schools it authorizes. The four members are the Superintendent of Schools, the Director of Teaching and Learning who serves as the Charter School Authorization Team Coordinator, the High School Principal, and the Director of Community Engagement and Outreach. All members ultimately answer to the Chisago Lakes School Board which has final decision-making authority.



Chisago Lakes School Board: The most important responsibility of the school board is to work with the communities to improve student achievement in our school system. In compliance with state and federal laws, the school board establishes policies and regulations by which the school is governed; this ultimately establishes policies that oversee authorization of charter schools in our portfolio. They are the final decision making body of our authorizing team.

Superintendent of Schools: The Superintendent of the Schools is the top executive in the school district. The superintendent implements the school board's vision. The superintendent hires, supervises, and manages the central staff and principals, including the Charter School Authorizing Team. When the Charter School Authorizing Team cannot make a decision by consensus, the Superintendent makes the decision that is delivered to the school board.

Charter School Authorization Team Coordinator (Director of Teaching & Learning): The Charter School Authorization Team Coordinator is responsible for the daily oversight and management of the authorizer activities. They establish the timelines for activities, facilitate Charter School Authorizing Team meetings, communicate with the directors of the charter schools in their portfolio, and attend the MDE and MACSA team meetings. With the curriculum background, this role has more responsibility in oversight of the academic progress of the charter schools. They consult with others as needed to ensure the charter schools are meeting their financial, governance and operational goals.

Chisago Lakes High School Principal: The High School Principal works with the Charter School Authorizing Team in monitoring the charter schools in their portfolio. Their expertise and guidance is especially warranted in academic and organizational programming in grades 9-12, including graduation requirements.

The Director of Community Engagement and Outreach: The Director of Community Engagement and Outreach oversees the implementation of community based practices, communication, and transparency of the charter schools in our portfolio.

The Director of Business Services serves in an advisory capacity and is not an official team member. They will pull financial statements and reports for the team.

Financial Capacity

It is the responsibility of Chisago Lakes School District as an authorizer to ensure that our network of charter schools has meaningful and transparent oversight. Of particular importance is Chisago Lakes School District's role in ensuring that its charter schools operate with a viable business model and the highest expectations for financial management. Currently, the Chisago Lakes School District's Charter School Authorization Team contains one Charter School Authorization Team Coordinator at approximately .1 FTE. We would maintain a staff ratio of .1 per school or better. Should our portfolio of authorized schools grow, staffing changes will be made in order to ensure this ratio is maintained. The Chisago Lakes School District's attorney is also integrally involved in approving contracts and other legal documents.

Authorizer Practices

Autonomy

In accordance with Minnesota law and the National Association of Charter School Authorizers Principles and Standards, Chisago Lakes School District, as an authorizer, "engages in responsible oversight of charter schools by ensuring that schools have both the autonomy to which they are entitled and the public accountability for which they are responsible" (<http://www.qualitycharters.org/>). This means that Chisago Lakes School District oversees the school board's management and operation of the school through monitoring and evaluating fiscal, operational, and student performance. See the [Charter School Autonomy Policy](#).

Conflict of Interest

Chisago Lakes School District strives to work in partnership with its member schools. Chisago Lakes School District seeks to give the charter schools access to its services and expertise, while performing its primary duty - the oversight of member schools. At all times Chisago Lakes School District, as an authorizer, shall comply with the conflict of interest laws provided in Minnesota Statute 124E.14 and other applicable state and federal laws. See the [Charter School Authorization Conflict of Interest Policy](#).

Charter Support, Development and Technical Assistance and Dissemination of Charter Schools' Best Practices

Chisago Lakes School District will provide authorized charter schools with support, development, and technical assistance. At a minimum, Chisago Lakes School District provides support as documented in the [Charter Assistance Plan](#). In addition, authorized charter schools may request assistance development or technical assistance on demand. Web-based resources and/or links to categories of areas for assistance (academic and instructional professional development and administrative support) can be found in the [Resources document](#).

Chisago Lakes School District will share high-quality charter school practices in the following ways:

Date	Dissemination of Best Practices
Ongoing	<p>Website</p> <p>Both the charter school and the authorizer’s websites will be updated at least monthly, highlighting an example of a success or achievement by its charter school.</p>
Monthly	<p>MACSA Meetings</p> <p>At the monthly MACSA meeting the authorizer’s attending member will readily share what is working well for its charter school(s) with the other authorizers</p>
Annually	<p>Board Meetings</p> <p>At least one in the school year, the director of the charter school will present to the authorizer’s school board a summary of its successes.</p>

Charter School Authorization Team Professional Development

The Charter School Authorization Team will take part in annual trainings. Sessions will align with the mission and vision as an authorizer, as well with state standards set by the Minnesota Department of Education and national standards from the National Association of Charter School Authorizers to ensure that members of the Chisago Lakes School District’s Charter School Authorization Team are using current authorizing and educational best practices.

The guiding document for determining the professional development needs of the Charter School Authorization Team is the [Needs Assessment](#). Annually, team members will complete the Needs Assessment. Based on the results of the Needs Assessment, professional development and trainings will be conducted.

Self-Evaluation

The Charter School Authorization Team will conduct a self-evaluation annually. The self-evaluation will focus on the five categories listed below and include a self-reflection narrative; thereby undertaking a full and comprehensive self-assessment of Chisago Lakes School District’s charter school authorizing program in compliance and alignment with MN charter school statutes. See [Charter School Authorization Self-Evaluation](#).

- Agency Capacity and Infrastructure
- Application Process
- Performance Contracting
- Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation
- Renewal Decision Making

Charter School Authorizing Program

Accountability - Overview

Charter schools were created to provide educators the freedom to create an innovative learning program in exchange for greater accountability regarding student progress and school administration. Chisago Lakes School District holds the schools it authorizes accountable in four major areas: academic and educational program, fiscal management - budget and finances, governance and leadership, operations and legal compliance.

As an authorizer, Chisago Lakes School District acknowledges and supports MN statute in that improving all pupil learning and all student achievement is the most important factor in determining contract renewal and will be based substantially on the school's attainment of its contract academic outcomes and goals. Successful performance in the areas of fiscal management, governance and leadership, operations and legal compliance, do not outweigh improving pupil performance and student achievement for all students.

Chisago Lakes School District believes in data-driven accountability and collects data in all areas with the goal of ensuring timely feedback and intervention to assure that all students learn at the highest possible level. Chisago Lakes School District uses documents such as charter contracts, annual reports, annual audits, and state academic assessments to measure the success of its authorized charter schools. In addition, Chisago Lakes School District also reviews unique school specific or other assessments implemented by school; like affective student development, positive graduation rates, projects, individual student goals, or workforce engagement.

All currently authorized charter schools will participate in performance reviews. All reviews will follow a similar format. These completed Assessment Rubrics will be used as a tool for tracking and measuring contract goals across time and for identifying and addressing interventions, corrections, and termination.

Site Visits

One of the most important ways Chisago Lakes School District gathers information about the schools it authorizes is through on-site visits. Site visits allow the authorizer to observe the school in action firsthand, hear directly from all key stakeholders, and corroborate school-reported information and data. Chisago Lakes School District conducts three different types of site visits: annual, ongoing, and renewal.

Annual Site Visit - Conducted January - February each year to gauge the school's progress toward meeting academic, financial, governance, and operational goals. Annual Site Visits are typically conducted by the Charter School Authorization Team who interview key stakeholders, conduct classroom observations, and attend a board meeting or meet with board members. The Annual visit may occur over several days. Written feedback is provided to the charter school board of directors and school leadership using the [Charter Annual Assessment Rubric](#).

Ongoing Monitoring Site Visit - Any member of the Charter School Authorization Team may conduct monitoring site visits at any time to fulfill its duties as an authorizer. Reasons for monitoring visits may include: determination of readiness to open, documentation of best practices, follow up on implementation of improvement plans, investigation of a complaint, or an informal visit while at the school for another reason. These visits may be impromptu or without notice. The frequency, duration, and intensity of these visits vary. Written feedback is provided to the charter school board of directors and school leadership.

Renewal Site Visit - This visit replaces the Annual Site visit and is conducted by the Charter School Authorization Team at least 6 months prior to the end of the school's contract term. This visit focuses on the school's performance over the entire term of the contract and compliance with state and federal regulations as well as authorizer standards and expectations. Written feedback is provided to the board of directors and school leadership using the [Renewal Assessment Rubric](#), which is used to determine contract renewal and application for a new contract.

Standards and Processes for Intervention, Correction, Complaints

Philosophy and Definition: Need for Intervention and Corrective Action

Chisago Lakes School District holds the schools it authorizes accountable in four major areas: academic performance, fiscal management, governance, operations and legal compliance. Authorized schools are reviewed annually to assess performance in these areas. If issues arise, such as a violation of the charter contract, state or federal law, the following interventions (notice of violation) and corrections (improvement plans) may be administered. Chisago Lakes School District will follow a systematic and transparent system for addressing complaints. *Note: Authorized schools, working with Chisago Lakes School District, may initiate interventions and corrections.*

Interventions and Corrections Communications

- Chisago Lakes School District will contact the authorized school in writing to ask about the issue.
- A third-party may be engaged to assess the significance and impact of the issue.
- Chisago Lakes School District retains the sole discretion to determine the level and severity of the issue.

Interventions and Correction Actions

The guiding steps are not sequential and any step may be implemented at any time.

Level	Metric	Action
AUTHORIZED:	Signs of strong performance (improve all pupil learning and all student achievement) identified through routine monitoring; through implementation, compliance, or performance reviews; or by other means.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Letter from Chisago Lakes School District to the charter school's Board of Directors detailing areas of achievement and performance indicators.
LEVEL ONE: Notice of Concern	<p>Signs of weak performance identified through routine monitoring; through implementation, compliance, or performance reviews; or by other means.</p> <p>Repeated failure to submit required documents on a timely basis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Letter from Chisago Lakes School District to the charter school's Board of Directors detailing areas of concern. ● Review and reconsideration of goals and performance targets in any of the Assessments (Annual, Renewal). ● Follow up within 1 year on areas of concern to adjust status AUTHORIZED or LEVEL TWO.
LEVEL TWO: Notice of Deficiency	<p>Failure to meet multiple performance targets; or glaring or repeated failure to meet a single performance target.</p> <p>Failure to comply with applicable law or significant failure to comply with condition(s) of the charter.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Letter from Chisago Lakes School District to charter school Board of Directors detailing areas of deficiency. ● Chisago Lakes School District and the school develop a School Improvement and Corrective Action Plan —containing specific improvement objectives, technical assistance requirements, and schedule for remedial action as negotiated with authorizer. ● Follow up within 1 year on areas of concern to adjust status AUTHORIZED or LEVEL THREE.

LEVEL THREE: Notice of Probationary Status	Continued failure to meet performance targets; and failure to meet objectives of School Improvement and Corrective Action Plan. Continued failure to comply with applicable law or with the charter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● School Improvement and Corrective Action Plan implemented. ● In certain cases, the authorizer may appoint an agent to monitor the implementation of the School Improvement and Corrective Action Plan and provide technical assistance. ● Follow up within 1 year on areas of concern to adjust status to LEVEL ONE or LEVEL FOUR.
LEVEL FOUR: Charter Review	Extended pattern of failure to comply or to meet performance targets; or failure to successfully address terms of probation (Level 3).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recommendation to revoke, not to revoke, or to impose lesser sanctions. ● Decision to commence or not to commence revocation proceedings made by Chisago Lakes School District.
LEVEL FIVE: Charter Revocation	Charter Review results in recommendation to revoke.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Written notice from Chisago Lakes School District stating reasons for proposed revocation and informing charter school of right to an informal hearing. ● Record of informal hearing. ● Decision to revoke or not to revoke made by Chisago Lakes School District

Complaint Actions

Chisago Lakes School District will address complaints regarding authorized schools in a timely and factual manner, following the process described below:

- If there is an issue that needs to be escalated to the District as an authorizer, a complainant should complete this [Complaint Form](#) to share the concern with Chisago Lakes School District.
- Chisago Lakes School District will acknowledge receipt of the complaint with an email from a member of the Charter School Authorization Team.
- Chisago Lakes School District will conduct a reasonable inquiry for the purpose of verifying whether the allegations provide sufficient evidence to establish the alleged violation(s) of law or fiscal mismanagement at the discretion of the Charter School Authorization Team.
- If the inquiry provides sufficient evidence to establish the alleged violation(s) of law or fiscal management, Chisago Lakes School District will notify the school and require action as necessary and appropriate and will strive to respond within thirty days recognizing that additional time may be necessary.
- The complainant may also complete the [MDE Complaint Form](#) (Oral or anonymous complaints will not be considered) to notify the Minnesota Department of Education.

Chisago Lakes School District Charter School Authorization

Overview of the Process of How Charter Applications are Approved or Denied

Pre-Application Exploration (For New Charter Applications only)

The Chisago Lakes Charter School Authorization Team Coordinator will screen potential applicants for mission “fit”, and validate the founder credentials, and potentially request a meeting. Mission fit includes alignment with Chisago Lakes School District’s charter school mission and vision and a determination if the school would diversify Chisago Lakes School District’s portfolio of charter schools in terms of student population, pedagogical approach, or organizational design. If deemed credible and aligned with the charter school mission, the application process may begin. *Important to note, Chisago Lakes School District does not authorize early learning programs.*

Letter of Intent

The charter school board or development team must submit a letter to Chisago Lakes School District stating the group’s intentions regarding an application. This allows the Charter School Authorization Team to allocate time and resources for meetings, site visits, and a review team.

Application

Charter schools boards or development teams are invited to apply for a new charter, a change in authorizer, an expansion, or renewal.

Initial Review

The Chisago Lakes Charter School Authorization Team Coordinator will initially review the application for content and completeness. The review will be based on the applicable rubrics for:

- [New Charter School Assessment](#)
- [Change in Authorizer Assessment](#)
- [Expansion Assessment](#)
- [Renewal Assessment](#)

Successful applications must first meet academic performance requirements (applications for New Charters do not have this data and this requirement is waived). Applications passing the academic performance section of the assessment will then be reviewed based on the remainder of the assessment items, including fiscal management, governance and leadership, operations and legal compliance. To be considered for an Institutional review the application must meet 90% of all rubric items. Those applications not meeting this requirement may be allowed 30 days to make revisions. The Chisago Lakes Charter School Authorization Team Coordinator will communicate in writing his or her determination to the charter school board or development team. The Chisago Lakes Charter School Authorization Team Coordinator will make a recommendation for an Institutional review based on the completed rubric.

Revisions

Successful applications must meet 90% of all rubric items. Those applications not meeting this requirement may be allowed 30 days to make revisions.

Institutional Review

As part of the Institutional Review, Chisago Lakes School District may conduct a site visit and interview . The Chisago Lakes Charter School Authorization Team will conduct the site visit and interview. The visit and interview will focus on the school’s plan and/or performance in the areas of: academic and educational program, fiscal management - budget and finances, governance and leadership, operations and legal compliance. Interviews may be conducted with, but not limited to, the following: school director, board chair, leaders of school divisions (such as principals), directors of finance, curriculum and other areas of the school, representative teachers and parents. Written feedback is provided to the charter school board or development team in the form of the completed rubric.

Final Determination

The Chisago Lakes Charter School Authorization Team will make the final determination to approve or deny an application based on the application, revisions, recommendations, and rubrics.

Charter School Authorizing Program - New Charter School

Applicants

Charter schools were created to provide educators the freedom to create an innovative learning program in exchange for greater accountability regarding student progress and school administration. Chisago Lakes School District is committed to supporting charter schools in Minnesota through its authorizing efforts.

The Chisago Lakes School District Authorizing Program will:

- Visibly and intentionally encourage and collaborate with schools that are examples of unique models of education and support the concept of school choice as it exists in Minnesota.
- Provide direct learning opportunities for our teacher candidates and faculty in innovative models of education.
- Collaborate with the schools to impact learning of all students and improve achievement through carefully implemented and measured approaches to teaching and learning.

Chisago Lakes School District does not authorize early learning programs.

New Charter School Application Process

An individual or group of individuals interested in starting a charter school are invited to apply to Chisago Lakes School District for authorization per Minnesota Statute 124E.06.

All new charter applications shall use the following process over the course of a three-year cycle (see Timeline below). The application process is as follows

- Pre-Application Exploration
- Application for New Charters
- Initial Review
- Revisions (if applicable)

- Institutional Review
- Final Determination

Pre-Application Exploration (First year in development cycle)

As a first step, an individual or group of individuals interested in starting a charter school should contact the Chisago Lakes Charter School Authorization Team Coordinator by email, indicating an interest in applying for authorization. The Chisago Lakes Charter School Authorization Team Coordinator will share the Chisago Lakes School District's Charter School Manual, New Charter Application, and Rubric. Additionally, the Chisago Lakes Charter School Authorization Team Coordinator will screen potential applicants for mission "fit", and validate the founder credentials, and potentially request a meeting. Mission fit includes alignment with Chisago Lakes School District's charter school mission and vision and a determination if the school would diversify Chisago Lakes School District's portfolio of charter schools in terms of student population, pedagogical approach, or organizational design. If deemed credible and aligned with Chisago Lakes School District's charter school mission, the application process may begin.

Application for New Charters (First year in development cycle)

Developers must submit an application to Chisago Lakes School District at least three months prior to the charter school affidavit deadline outlined in MN Statute. One hard copy and one electronic copy should be sent to the Chisago Lakes Charter School Authorization Team Coordinator. As recommended by The Minnesota Association of Charter Schools, Chisago Lakes School District will require a new charter school to develop and complete Conflict of Interest statement in compliance with statutory regulations. In addition, Chisago Lakes School District will require a completed criminal background check (submitted by the individual applicants) and reference check of all potential school developers/leadership. As part of the application process, potential school developers/leadership will incur the costs of the background check. See the [New Charter School Application](#).

Initial Review (Second year in development cycle)

The Chisago Lakes Charter School Authorization Team Coordinator will initially review the application for content and completeness. The review will be based on the [New Charter School Assessment](#). Written feedback is provided to the charter school board or development team in the form of the completed rubric.

Revisions

Successful applications must meet 90% of all rubric items. Those applications not meeting this requirement may be allowed 30 days to make revisions.

Institutional Review (Second year in development cycle)

As part of the Institutional Review, Chisago Lakes School District will conduct a site visit and interview . The Chisago Lakes Charter School Authorization Team will conduct the site visit and interview. The visit and interview will focus on the school's plan and/or performance in the areas of: academic and educational program, fiscal management - budget and finances, governance and leadership, operations and legal compliance.

The interview will also address alignment with Chisago Lakes School District’s Charter School Authorizing Program mission and criteria, the educational and financial viability of the proposal, and the developers/leadership’s capacity to implement an idea into a reality. Interviews may be conducted with, but not limited to, the following: school director, board chair, leaders of school divisions (such as principals), directors of finance, curriculum and other areas of the school, representative teachers and parents. Written feedback is provided to the charter school board or development team in the form of the completed rubric.

Final Determination (Second year in development cycle)

The Chisago Lakes School District’s Charter School Authorization Team will make the final determination to approve or deny an application based on the application, revisions, recommendations, and rubrics.

If the Chisago Lakes School District’s Charter School Authorization Team approves a charter school application, the Chisago Lakes Charter School Authorization Team Coordinator will work with the developing team to prepare and submit its affidavit to the Minnesota Department of Education for approval.

Chisago Lakes School District reserves the right to suspend the acceptance of new applications if at any time it determines, in its sole discretion, that it does not have sufficient resources to authorize additional charter schools. In that event, prospective applicants will be advised accordingly at the earliest possible date.

Timeline - Three *calendar* year cycle

Process Step	Applicant Action Dates	CLSD Action Timeframe
Pre-Application Exploration	July - October	July - October
Application	Due to Chisago Lakes School District Dec 1	
Initial Review		15 days
Revisions	30 days (if applicable)	30 days (if applicable)
Institutional Review		30 days
Final Determination	No later than April 1	March
MDE affidavit approval process	<i>(needs at least 14 months before July 1 of the year the new charter school plans to serve students)</i>	May - July 14+ mos ready to open

Minnesota's Charter School Law (MN Statutes § 124E.06 Subd. 4)

Before the operators may establish and operate a school, the authorizer must file an affidavit with the commissioner stating its intent to charter a school. An authorizer must file a separate affidavit for each school it intends to charter. 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 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 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.

Start-up and Oversight (Third year in development cycle)

A charter school's ability to successfully fulfill the primary components of its contractual agreement with their authorizer (Academic and Education Program, Budget and Finances, Governance, Operations and Legal Compliance) depends a great deal on what happens before the school opens.

The third year in the development cycle focuses on Ready to Open. These are the most complicated tasks, critical timelines, and demanding commitments of a charter schools' pre-operational year. Therefore, in addition to hired staff, it is expected that the school leadership absorb much of the work of start-up including: grant writing, curriculum design, facilities designation, and hiring. Additionally, the Chisago Lakes Charter School Authorization Team Coordinator will work closely with the leadership to complete the broad scope of activities necessary to open the school.

Ready to Open

- Progress and completion of start-up activities are recorded and reviewed at all interim board meetings
- The applicant's Start-up coordinator/school director will have monthly update meetings with the Chisago Lakes Charter School Authorization Team Coordinator
- [Ready to Open Task List](#) items must be completed before the school may open
- [Ready to Open Site Visit \(link\)](#) must be completed before the school may open

Note: The opening of the school will be postponed by one year in accordance with Minnesota Statute 124E.06, subdivision 3(h): (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 (1) the authorizer's oversight and evaluation process or (2) stipulated in the charter school contract.

Charter School Authorizing Program - Expansion

Charter schools were created to provide educators the freedom to create an innovative learning program in exchange for greater accountability regarding student progress and school administration. Chisago Lakes is committed to supporting charter schools in Minnesota through its authorizing efforts.

Chisago Lakes School District authorized charter schools which are looking to add grades beyond those defined in the original affidavit approved by the commissioner must be able to demonstrate a record of strong academic success, fiscal responsibility, and a significant and justifiable need.

Expansion Process

All Expansion applications shall use the following process:

- Letter of Intent
- Application ([Expansion Application](#))
- Initial Review
- Revisions (if applicable)
- Institutional Review
- Final Determination

As a note, the Charter School Expansion - Supplemental affidavit consists of:

- Part A: Submission Eligibility and Affidavit Forms
- Part C: Authorizer Capacity
- Part D: Authorizer's Review Process
- Part E: Oversight and Compliance

Timeline

Process Step	Applicant Action Dates	CLSD Action Dates
Letter of Intent	Open due date	
Application	Open due date, but no later than May 1	
Initial Review		15 days
Revisions	30 days provided (if applicable)	30 days (if applicable)
Institutional Review		30 days
Final Determination		August - September
MDE affidavit approval process		<i>Filing of affidavit by Oct 1 is required in order to complete the expansion by the following academic year.</i>

124E.06 Minn. Stat. Subd. 5. Adding grades or sites. (a) 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. The supplemental affidavit must document to the authorizer's satisfaction:

(1) the need for the additional grades or sites with supporting long-range enrollment projections;

(2) a longitudinal record of student academic performance and growth on statewide assessments under chapter 120B or on other academic assessments that measure longitudinal student performance and growth approved by the charter school's board of directors and agreed upon with the authorizer;

(3) a history of sound school finances and a plan to add grades or sites that sustains the school's finances; and

(4) board capacity to administer and manage the additional grades or sites.

(b) The commissioner shall have 30 business days to review and comment on the supplemental affidavit. The commissioner shall notify the authorizer in writing of any deficiencies in the supplemental affidavit and the authorizer then has 20 business days to address any deficiencies in the supplemental affidavit to the commissioner's satisfaction. 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. The school may not add grades or sites until the commissioner has approved the supplemental affidavit. The commissioner's approval or disapproval of a supplemental affidavit is final.

Charter School Authorizing Program - Renewal

Chisago Lakes School District views renewal as an ongoing process, engaged in by the school leadership, the board of directors, and the authorizer, throughout the entire life of the school's contract. Annual site visits inform the authorizer that the school is operating as designed and expected and is meeting its goals. The formal contract renewal process begins with the school submitting a Letter of Intent.

All renewal applications shall use the following process:

- Letter of Intent
- Application ([Renewal Application](#))
- Initial Review
- Revisions (if applicable)
- Institutional Review
- Final Determination

Overall, the Renewal Application should address and provide evidence for the following:

Academic and Education Program	Is the academic program a success?
Fiscal management - Budget and Finances	Is the school a financially viable and healthy organization?
Governance and Leadership	Is the school faithful to its stated mission, goals, and objectives?
Operations and Compliance	Is the school faithful to the terms of its contract?
Reflection	Does the school recognize where growth is most essential? Does the school have realistic and attainable goals for the future?

Timeline

Process Step	Applicant Action Dates	CLSD Action Timeframe
Letter of Intent	Open due date	
Application	Due no later than Aug 1 the year prior to end of contract	
Initial Review		15 days
Revisions	30 days provided (if applicable)	30 days (if applicable)
Institutional Review		30 days
Final Determination		January <i>(submit within 10 business days of execution)</i>

Renewal Guidelines

As an authorizer, Chisago Lakes School District acknowledges and supports MN statute in that improving all pupil learning and all student achievement is the most important factor in determining contract renewal and will be based substantially on the school's attainment of its contract academic outcomes and goals. Successful performance in the areas of fiscal management, governance and leadership, operations and legal compliance, do not outweigh improving pupil learning and student achievement for all students.

Number of Years *	School Performance Measure
5	School is authorized due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Successfully demonstrating improving all pupil learning and all student achievement as related to contract goals and MN Statute ● Successful performance in the areas of fiscal management, governance and leadership, operations and legal compliance, but does not outweigh improving pupil learning and student achievement for all students.
3	School is on Level 1 Notice of Concern or Level 2 Notice of Deficiency due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Failure to meet multiple performance targets; or glaring or repeated failure to meet a single performance target. ● Failure to comply with applicable law or significant failure to comply with condition(s) of the charter.
1	School is on Level 3 Notice of Probationary Status due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continued failure to meet performance targets; and failure to meet objectives of School Improvement and Corrective Action Plan. ● Continued failure to comply with applicable law or with the charter.
Possible Non-renewal or Closure	School is on Level 4 Charter Review due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Failure to successfully address terms of probationary status (Level 3). ● Continued and extended pattern of failure to comply or to meet performance targets

* Schools meeting contract goals, statutory requirements, and passing the academic performance section in addition to the remainder of the assessment items, such as fiscal management, governance and leadership, operations and legal compliance may be eligible for the recommended number of renewal years.

Charter School Authorizing Program - Change in Authorizer (Mutual Non-renewal)

Change in Authorizer applies in two settings:

- 1) If the currently Chisago Lakes School District's authorized charter school and Chisago Lakes School District, as authorizer, mutually agree to not renew the contract, a request for a change of authorizer would be implemented.
- 2) If the currently authorized charter school seeks a change in authorizer and is moving from another authorizer to Chisago Lakes School District, a request for a change of authorizer would be implemented.

The process for Change in Authorizer would follow *MN Statute 124E.10, subd.5. Mutual non-renewal.*

If the authorizer and the charter school board of directors 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 proposed authorizer must submit the proposed contract at least 105 business days before the end of the existing charter contract. The commissioner has 30 business days to review and make a determination on the change in authorizer. The proposed authorizer and the school have 15 business days to respond to the determination and address any issues identified by the commissioner. The commissioner must make a final determination 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.

The Change in Authorizer must address the requirements listed below to submit a request to the Minnesota Department of Education. Requests must contain four parts:

- Part A - [Forms and Assurances](#)
- Part B - Authorizer Summary
- Part C - Attachments
- Part D - Proposed Contract

Change in Authorizer Process

Setting 1 Process to be followed:	Setting 2 Process to be followed:
<i>currently Chisago Lakes School District's authorized charter school and Chisago Lakes School District, as authorizer, mutually agree to not renew the contract</i>	<i>currently authorized charter school seeks a change in authorizer and is moving from another authorizer to Chisago Lakes School District</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Letter of Intent ● Institutional Review ● Final Determination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Letter of Intent ● Application Change in Authorizer ● Initial Review ● Revisions ● Institutional Review ● Final Determination

Chisago Lakes School District, in its sole discretion, reserves the right at any point in the application process to deny the charter school's Change of Authorizer application with or without providing a rationale.

Setting 1 Process

Letter of Intent

The charter school board must submit a letter to Chisago Lakes School District stating the reason for the request to submit an application for a change in authorizer.

Institutional Review - As part of the Institutional Review, Chisago Lakes School District will conduct a site visit and interview (this will replace the Annual Site visit and follows the Renewal Site visit format). The Chisago Lakes Charter School Authorization Team will conduct the site visit and interview at least 6 months prior to the end of the school's contract term or upon request as indicated in the Letter of Intent. This visit focuses on the school's performance over the entire term of the contract and compliance with state and federal regulations as well as authorizer standards and expectations. Written feedback is provided to the board of directors and school leadership using the [Renewal Assessment Rubrics](#), which will be shared with the future authorizer.

Final Determination:

The team will make the final determination to approve or deny an application based on the application, revisions, recommendations, and rubrics.

Setting 2 Process

Letter of Intent

The charter school board must submit a letter to Chisago Lakes School District stating the reason for the request to submit an application for a change in authorizer. This letter should state how the school's mission aligns with Chisago Lakes School District's authorizing mission and why the school believes Chisago Lakes would be an appropriate authorizer for the school. The Chisago Lakes Charter School Authorization Team Coordinator will initially review the Letter of Intent for content and completeness.

Institutional Review

As part of the Institutional Review, Chisago Lakes Charter School Authorization Team will conduct a site visit and interview. The visit and interview will focus on the school's plan and/or performance in the areas of: academic and educational program, fiscal management - budget and finances, governance and leadership, operations and legal compliance. Additionally, the site visit and interview is to observe the learning program and may include meeting with key stakeholders including families, teachers, school staff, business office personnel, school leadership, and board members. Finally, the site visit and observations will be used to assess the school's performance, alignment with Chisago Lakes School District's Charter School Authorizing Program mission and criteria, and the educational and financial viability of the school.

Final Determination:

The Chisago Lakes Charter School Authorization Team will make the final determination to approve or deny an application based on the application, revisions, recommendations, and rubrics.

Timeline

	Setting 1		Setting 2	
Process Step	Applicant Action Dates	CLSD Action Dates	Applicant Action Dates	CLSD Action Dates
Letter of Intent	Open due date, no later than September 1		Open due date	
Application	Not applicable	Not applicable	Due no later than July 1 the year prior to end of the contract	
Initial Review	Not applicable	Not applicable		15 days
Revisions	Not applicable	Not applicable	30 days (if applicable)	30 days (if applicable)
Institutional Review		30 days <i>at least 6 months prior to the end of the school's contract term</i>		30 days
Final Determination				November - December
MDE affidavit approval process		<i>at least 105 business days before end of existing contract ending on June 30</i>		<i>at least 105 business days before end of existing contract ending on June 30</i>

Charter School Authorizing Program - Termination

Causes for non renewal or termination of a charter school contract are spelled out in *Minnesota Statute 124E.10 CHARTER CONTRACT. Subd. 4. Causes for non renewal or termination of charter school contract. (a) The duration of the contract with an authorizer must be for the term contained in the contract according to subdivision 1, paragraph (a). The authorizer may or may not renew a contract at the end of the term for any ground listed in paragraph (b). An authorizer may unilaterally terminate a contract during the term of the contract for any ground listed in paragraph (b). At least 60 business days before not renewing or terminating a contract, the authorizer shall notify the board of directors of the charter school of the proposed action in writing. The notice shall state the grounds for the proposed action in reasonable detail and describe the informal hearing process, consistent with this paragraph. The charter school's board of directors may request in writing an informal hearing before the authorizer within 15 business days after receiving notice of nonrenewal or termination of the contract. Failure by the board of directors to make a written request for an informal hearing within the 15-business-day period shall be treated as acquiescence to the proposed action. Upon receiving a timely written request for a hearing, the authorizer shall give ten business days' notice to the charter school's board of directors of the hearing date. The authorizer shall conduct an informal hearing before taking final action. The authorizer shall take final action to renew or not renew a contract no later than 20 business days before the proposed date for terminating the contract or the end date of the contract.*

(b) An authorizer may terminate or not renew a contract upon any of 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.

If the authorizer terminates or does not renew a contract under this paragraph, the school must be dissolved according to the applicable provisions of chapter 317A.

The Chisago Lakes Charter School Authorization Team follows guidelines and Minnesota statutes for termination or revocation of charter school authorization. It is the intent of Chisago Lakes School District that every effort will be made for its charter schools to improve and become effective learning environments. A chart outlining the range of authorizer interventions may be found under Interventions, Corrections, Complaints section of this document. Charter revocation is the final step in a long process of improvement.

Charter School Authorizing Program - Charter School Closure Plan

Should charter closure need to take place, a timeline and procedures are identified and will be followed. See the [Charter School Closure Plan](#).

Note: This procedure follows Minnesota Statute 124E.10 (b) In addition to the requirements of paragraph (a), the charter contract must contain the plan for an orderly closing of the school under chapter 317A, that establishes the responsibilities of the school board of directors and the authorizer, whether the closure is a termination for cause, a voluntary termination, or a non-renewal of the contract. The plan must establish who is responsible for:

(1) notifying the commissioner, school district in which the charter school is located, and parents of enrolled students about the closure;

(2) providing parents of enrolled students information and assistance to enable the student to re-enroll in another school;

(3) transferring student records under section 124E.03, subdivision 5, paragraph (b), to the student's resident school district; and

(4) closing financial operations.