



Change in Authorizer Application Process

Revised December 2024

Letter of Intent due September 1st Annually
Application is due December 1st Annually
(Deadlines may change under certain circumstances with permission from MDE)

A charter school currently in operation in Minnesota under *Minnesota Statutes* § 124E.10, Subd.5 may apply to Volunteers of America-Minnesota (VOA-MN) for a change in authorizer under the following parameters.

A charter school board submits a Letter of Intent to Apply to VOA-MN for a change in authorizer. If a Letter of Intent to Apply is approved by VOA-MN, the charter school board may submit a full application for a change in authorizer to VOA-MN. Only complete applications will be considered. If an application is approved, VOA-MN will submit a change in authorizer request to the Minnesota Department of Education with the intent to authorize the charter school, per Minn. Stat. 124E.10, Subd.5. At any point in the process, VOA-MN may move to deny authorization of a charter school and may not provide a reason for denial.

Minn. Stat. 124E.10, Subd.5

If the authorizer and the charter school board of directors mutually agree not to renew the contract, 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, as well as any outstanding contractual obligations that exist. 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 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 no change in authorizer is approved, the school and the current authorizer may withdraw their letter of nonrenewal and enter into a new contract. If the transfer of authorizers is not approved 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.

LETTER OF INTENT TO APPLY FOR CHANGE OF AUTHORIZATION

VOA-MN is committed to authorizing high quality charter schools with proven results. We will only consider a change in authorizer application from charter schools that are able to adequately illustrate historically strong academic performance based on the state assessment system, strong history of compliance, and fiscal sustainability. If a charter board is not able to meet any of the three requirements listed below then they are not eligible to apply to VOA-MN for authorization.

The charter school board must submit a letter to VOA-MN stating the reason for the request to submit an application for a change in authorizer. This letter should state how the school's mission and vision aligns with VOA-MN Authorizing Program mission and vision and why the school believes VOA-MN would be an appropriate authorizer for the school. **In the Letter of Intent to Apply for Change Authorization the board must demonstrate that they meet all of the VOA-MN Authoring Program required criteria for a change of authorizer. Required criteria include:**

- Proof that the school has a fund balance of at least 15 percent in the last audited fiscal year as illustrated in its most recent financial audit. The school's most recent audit is free of findings.
- The school is meeting their primary statutory purpose to "increase all pupil learning and all student achievement." The school demonstrates longitudinal growth on the state exams. The school is outperforming their local school

district school with similar student demographics on the state exams. The school is meeting their present charter contract academic performance goals or making progress meeting the terms of their school improvement plan.

- Assurance that the school has been compliant with the majority of MDE reporting deadlines within the past two years.
- Explanation of the school's service-learning component in their education program or plans for developing one.
- Assurance that the school's website is compliant with all statutory requirements.

Additionally, applicants must provide the following documents with the Letter of Intent to Apply for Change Authorization:

- Letter of Mutual Agreement to terminate or not renew the charter contract. This must be a joint letter from both entities that is signed and dated by the authorizer and board chair.
- The authorizer's formal written evaluation of the school's performance. The evaluation must report on the academic, financial, operational, and student performance of the school during the present contract term. The evaluation must also identify any concerns or deficiencies discovered during the evaluation of the school.

VOA-MN will review the Letter of Intent to Apply for Change Authorization and may choose to visit the school prior to determining whether to invite the board to submit a full application. If VOA-MN invites the board to submit a full application, the board must follow the process outlined below.

CHANGE OF AUTHORIZER APPLICATION

If invited to apply, the Change in Authorizer Application should address the following areas: academic program, financial management and oversight, and governance and organizational capacity following the criteria in the "Change of Authorizer Application." If the outgoing authorizer identifies any concerns about the performance of the charter school or board in documentation to VOA-MN, the board must respond to those concerns.

SITE VISIT - VOA-MN 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. The purpose of a site visit is to observe the learning program and meet with key stakeholders like board members, teachers, parents, school leadership, and business office staff. VOA will use information provided in the Letter of Intent, Change in Authorizer Application and related attachments, and site visit to perform an evaluation using the VOA Annual School Evaluation Rubric.

INTERVIEW - Applicants will be asked to participate in an interview with review team and VOA-MN Authorizing Program representatives.

SUBMIT MATERIALS *ELECTRONICALLY* TO: VOA-MN Charter School Authorizing Program
c/o Stephanie Olsen, Program Manager, solsen@voamn.org

QUESTIONS: Contact Stephanie Olsen at solsen@voamn.org or 612-270-1998.



Change in Authorizer Application (Revised 2022)

INTENT TO APPLY DEADLINE: September 1st

APPLICATION DEADLINE: December 1st

The following is an estimated timeline upon receipt of the school's transfer application:

- Approximately five business days for technical review and notice of invitation to apply.
- Approximately five days for distribution of applications to peer reviewers.
- Approximately 15 business days for peer desk review process.
- Approximately 5 business days for applicant to provide additional clarification / information based on concerns expressed in desk review.
- Approximately 5 business days after the peer reviewers receive supplemental information from Applicant, applicant interview occurs.
- Approximately 10 business days, final determination is issued from VOA-MN to applicant.
- Total estimated time span: 9-10 weeks.

DOCUMENTATION

Please provide the following information as part of your application for a change in authorizer (documents should be provided electronically and combined into one submission):

- Two most recent annual reports
- Two most recent financial audits
- Complete board meeting packets from February through June of the most recent fiscal year.
- Board roster which includes: member names, positions, group represented, election term, and an explanation of the expertise each member brings to the board.
- Copy of the current board meeting calendar.
- Copy of the board meeting minutes from February through June of the most recent fiscal year.
- Previous and current year budget and year-to-date actuals
- Board's director evaluation policy and process
- Four years of school academic longitudinal data based on the state exams (can be pulled from the MDE website).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Please provide a brief narrative explaining the school's history and highlighting the school's accomplishments over the previous charter contract period.

SCHOOL PROGRAM

- **Learning Program**

Describe the guiding educational philosophy of your school. Provide an overview of the curricula, tools, methods and instructional techniques that support the educational philosophy. Cite and explain research evidence demonstrating these curricula, tools, techniques and methods support all pupil learning and all student achievement. Describe the school's professional development plan.

Discuss how the learning program aligns with the school's mission, vision, and goals.

- **Financial Management and Sustainability**

Describe how the school board appropriately oversees the school's financials. Explain the financial training the board members have received. How is the board structured to ensure that a significant body of people have strong working knowledge of the school's financials (e.g. describe the board's committee structure and treasurer's involvement in oversight).

- **Board Governance**

Describe the school's governance model (i.e., how is membership defined, board composition, etc.). Explain how the governance model provides quality oversight of the school.

- **School Management and Operations**

Describe the school's leadership structure and team and explain how the structure supports both the learning program and effective operations of the school.

Provide a complete faculty roster with names, positions, and for classroom teachers their license number and assignment.

Discuss the school's facility and comment on the changes made over the course of the contract to improve the physical learning environment.

- **Applicant Interview**

After the desk review of the application, candidates will be scheduled for an interview with the peer reviewers. Individuals participating in the interview must be prepared to articulate their expertise and corresponding contributions to the school. Applicants must be prepared to demonstrate a thorough knowledge of their change of authorizer application.



**CHANGE OF AUTHORIZER APPLICATION REVIEW RUBRIC
PHASE 1: LETTER OF INTENT**

Applicant Name:
Peer Reviewer Name:

Note: A rating of “unsatisfactory” in any section may render the application ineligible for approval.

Point System: Applicants must earn a base score of no less than 45/50 points (satisfactory rating in all categories). In a competitive process with multiple applicants, the applicant receiving the highest score will be approved.

School Mission and Vision Fit with VOA-MN	
<i>The Letter of Intent contains an explanation of how the school’s mission and vision align with VOA-MN Authorizing Program mission and vision.</i>	
Rating (mark with a "X")	Reviewer Comments:
Satisfactory (9-10pts)	
Approaching Satisfactory (7-8pts)	
Unsatisfactory (pts)	
Authorizer / School Alignment	
<i>The Letter of Intent contains an explanation of why the school believes VOA-MN would be an appropriate authorizer for the school.</i>	
Rating (mark with a "X")	Reviewer Comments:
Satisfactory (9-10pts)	
Approaching Satisfactory (7-8 pts.)	
Unsatisfactory (0 pts.)	
School Financial Health	
<i>The Letter of Intent contains information on the fiscal health of the school. The school has a fund balance of at least 15 percent in the last audited fiscal year as illustrated in its most recent financial audit. The school’s most recent audit is free of findings.</i>	
Rating (mark with a "X")	Reviewer Comments:
Satisfactory (9-10 pts.)	
Approaching Satisfactory (7-8 pts.)	
Unsatisfactory (0 pts.)	
Academic Performance	
<i>The Letter of Intent contains information on how the school is meeting their primary statutory purpose to “increase all pupil learning and all student achievement.” The school demonstrates longitudinal growth on the state exams. The school is outperforming their local school district school with similar student demographics on the state exams. The school is meeting their present charter contract academic performance goals.</i>	
Rating (mark with a "X")	Reviewer Comments:
Satisfactory (9-10pts.)	
Approaching Satisfactory (7-8 pts.)	
Unsatisfactory (0 pts.)	
Service Learning	
<i>The Letter of Intent contains an explanation of the school’s service-learning component in their education program or plans for developing one.</i>	
Rating (mark with a "X")	Reviewer Comments:
Satisfactory (9-10 pts.)	
Approaching Satisfactory (7-8 pts.)	
Unsatisfactory (0 pts.)	

Reporting Compliance – Not scored	
<i>The Letter of Intent includes an assurance that the school has been compliant with the majority of MDE reporting deadlines within the past two years.</i>	
<i>Rating (mark with a "X")</i>	Reviewer Comments:
Satisfactory	
Unsatisfactory	
Website Compliance – Not scored	
<i>The Letter of Intent contains an assurance that the school's website is compliant with all statutory requirements.</i>	
<i>Rating (mark with a "X")</i>	Reviewer Comments:
Satisfactory	
Unsatisfactory	
Final Score /50	
<i>NOTE: School must earn a minimum score of 45/50 (90%) for approval to proceed to apply</i>	

Reviewer Recommendation: _____ Approve _____ Not Approve

Change of Authorizer Application Rubric

Peer Reviewer Name: _____

Rating Scale:

- **Satisfactory:** Strengths outweigh weaknesses. This rating applies to a response that contains a number of strengths. There are weaknesses, but, neither singly or collectively, are they likely to adversely impact the development and operation of a high-performing charter school.
- **Approaching Satisfactory:** Section contains strengths, but clarification / additional work is needed.
- **Unsatisfactory:** Major weaknesses outweigh any strengths. This rating applies to a response that contains a number of weaknesses that are likely to adversely impact the development and operation of a high-performing charter school.

Note: A rating of “unsatisfactory” in any section may render the application ineligible for approval.

Point System: Applicants must earn a base score of no less than 90/100 points (satisfactory rating in all categories). In a competitive process with multiple applicants, the applicant receiving the highest score will be approved.

I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (not scored) <i>The executive summary provides a brief rationale for the desired change in authorizer and touches on the school’s most compelling arguments for choosing VOAMN as their potential new authorizer.</i>	
<i>Rating (mark with a "X")</i>	Comments:
<i>Satisfactory</i>	
<i>Unsatisfactory</i>	
II. LEARNING PROGRAM (25 pts) <i>The applicant describes the guiding educational philosophy of the school. Information in this section includes an overview of the curricula, tools, methods and instructional techniques that support the educational philosophy. The applicant cites and explains research supporting these curricula, tools, techniques and methods support all pupil learning and all student achievement. This section includes a discussion of how the learning program aligns with the school’s mission, vision, and goals. The section includes a description of the school’s professional development plan.</i>	
<i>Rating</i>	Comments:
<i>Satisfactory (23-25 pts)</i>	
<i>Approaching Satisfactory (20-22 pts.)</i>	
<i>Unsatisfactory (0 pts.)</i>	
III. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY (20 pts) <i>The application demonstrates that the charter school has a history of sound school finances and policies in place to promote the school’s financial sustainability. The applicant describes how the school board appropriately oversees the school’s financials and explains the financial training the board members have received. The applicant describes how the school board is structured to ensure that a significant body of people have strong working knowledge of the school’s financials (e.g., describe the board’s committee structure and treasurer’s involvement in oversight).</i>	
<i>Rating</i>	Comments:
<i>Satisfactory (18-20 pts.)</i>	

<i>Approaching Satisfactory</i> (16-17 pts.)	
<i>Unsatisfactory</i> (0 pts.)	

IV. BOARD GOVERNANCE (20 pts)

The application describes the school's governance model (i.e. how membership is defined, board composition, etc.). The applicant explains how the school governance model provides quality oversight of the school. Board composition and school website is compliant with requirements set forth in state law.

<i>Rating</i>	
<i>Satisfactory</i> (18-20 pts.)	
<i>Approaching Satisfactory</i> (16-17 pts.)	
<i>Unsatisfactory</i> (0 pts.)	

Comments:

V. SCHOOL MANAGEMENT & OPERATIONS (15 pts)

The applicant describes the school's leadership structure and explains how the structure supports both the learning program and effective operations of the school. Application includes a complete faculty roster with names, positions, and for classroom teachers their license number and assignment. The application provides an explanation of the school's facility and includes a discussion of any changes that have occurred to improve the physical learning environment.

<i>Rating</i>	
<i>Satisfactory</i> (14-15 pts.)	
<i>Approaching Satisfactory</i> (12-13 pts.)	
<i>Unsatisfactory</i> (0 pts.)	

Comments:

VII: APPLICANT INTERVIEW (20 pts.)

Applicants demonstrate a thorough knowledge of their change of authorizer application. Individuals participating in the interview were able to articulate their expertise and corresponding contributions to the school.

<i>Rating (mark with a "X")</i>	
<i>Satisfactory</i> (18-20 pts)	
<i>Approaching Satisfactory</i> (16-17 pts.)	
<i>Unsatisfactory</i> (0)	
Final Score	/ 100

Comments:

Recommendation: _____ **Approve** _____ **Not Approve**