

Maine Charter School Commission

NEW CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION

For Schools Opening in the 2026-2027 School Year

DRAFT Issue Date: January 16, 2024

Issue Date: July 1, 2024

Letter of Intent: July 15, 2024

Due Date: February 13, 2025, 5:00 pm EDT

Maine Charter School Commission Vote: May 13, 2025

Maine Charter School Commission

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For more information about the contents of this document, please contact:

Email: mcsc@maine.gov

Phone: (470) 600-4901

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Maine Charter School Commission
Attn: Executive Director
182 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0182

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INTRODUCTION

This Request for Proposal (RFP) is intended to solicit, encourage, and guide the development of high-quality public charter school applications throughout the State of Maine. This RFP format is for brick-and-mortar and blended learning schools.

Applications in response to this RFP are for consideration by the Maine Charter School Commission (the “Commission”) only. Applications to other authorizers must use the application forms and follow the procedures developed by those authorizers.

This RFP/Application packet will guide you through the steps of developing a public charter school proposal. Each section requests information about a specific aspect of your plan and presents the evaluative criteria that reviewers will use to determine whether the application demonstrates the applicant’s competence in each element of the Commission’s published approval criteria and demonstrates that the applicant is ready to open and operate a successful public charter school.

The Commission requires that successful applicants demonstrate several common characteristics:

- A clear, focused, results-oriented mission statement that aligns all parts of the proposal;
- A vision of how the program will improve educational and social opportunities for the charter school’s student population and how the program will meet a community need and affect the community. (Note: the term “community” refers to the catchment area, *i.e.*, the individual school administrative units and towns/cities that are within that catchment area);
- A demonstrated understanding of the population that the school intends to serve;
- An educational program that is likely to be effective for that population;
- A commitment to continuing professional education for faculty and staff;
- Facilities and a facilities maintenance plan that support the program;
- A commitment to inviting the participation of stakeholders in the operation of the school, including parents, students, staff and the community at large;
- Strong, experienced school and board leadership; and
- Strong financial planning and management.

Specifically, the Commission is seeking proposals that include innovative curriculum design, scheduling that supports that design, and a school calendar that reflects the mission and vision of the school. The Commission is especially interested in schools that address student populations whose needs are not well served by existing public schools.

The Commission is eager to receive well-developed applications from capable school developers who are committed to educating their students well and improving the lives of children and families in Maine's communities.

The Commission will announce one or more sessions where potential applicants may meet as a group with the Commission staff to discuss the application and the application process and any directions regarding the application or the application evaluation process.

The entire public charter school application and all documents associated with the application are public records and will be posted on the Maine Charter School Commission website.

In the meantime, if you have any questions regarding this application or the application process, please contact us at mcsc@maine.gov.

Eligibility

This New Charter School Application process seeks applications for schools that plan to open and serve students in the 2026-2027 school year. If an applicant applies for the 2027-2028 school year, it will be reviewed for the same readiness standards as the schools intending to open in the designated solicitation year (2026-2027). Applicants for the 2027-2028 school year must *also* provide good cause for delaying the proposed school's opening for one year beyond the designated solicitation year.

By law, only nonprofit organizations may operate charter schools in the state of Maine. Documentation that the applicant is a Maine nonprofit corporation, has filed an application for exemption (Form 1023) with the Internal Revenue Service, or has a notice of exemption satisfies this requirement.

Applications will be reviewed for satisfaction of the eligibility requirements (see Completeness Review). If these eligibility requirements are not met, the application will be summarily rejected.

ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Reservation of Rights

The Commission reserves the right to reissue the New Charter School Application, or cancel the New Charter School Application, as deemed appropriate by the Commission. **Applicants are expected to review this New Charter School Application closely; revisions have been made to process and content.**

Proper Communication

Upon release of this New Charter School Application, all applicant communications must be directed to the Executive Director of the Maine Charter School Commission. Unauthorized contact with other state or Commission employees or representatives may result in disqualification. All oral communications will be considered unofficial and non-binding. Applicants should rely only on written statements issued by the Executive Director.

Lana Ewing, Executive Director
Maine Charter School Commission
182 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0182

Telephone: 470-600-4901
Email: mcsc@maine.gov

Applicant Questions and Complaints

Applicant questions regarding this New Charter School Application will be allowed consistent with the *Timeline*. All questions must be submitted via email to the Executive Director at mcsc@maine.gov. Official written Commission responses will be provided for questions received by the deadlines, and will be posted at: www.maine.gov/csc

Applicants submitting questions will not be identified in the Commission's response. Verbal responses to questions will be considered unofficial and non-binding. Only written responses posted to the Commission website listed above will be considered official and binding.

Applicants are expected to raise any questions they have concerning the New Charter School Application requirements early in the New Charter School Application process. The Commission may not be able to address questions that arise late in the process.

Delivery of Applications

The application, in its entirety, must be received by the Commission no later than **5:00 pm EDT on February 13, 2025**. All applications must be submitted to the Maine Charter School Commission via the Epicenter online application platform, at www.epicenternow.org. Submissions are time stamped when uploaded to Epicenter. **Submissions will not be accepted after the deadline.**

Applicants should allow sufficient time to ensure timely receipt of the application by the Maine Charter School Commission. Late submissions will not be accepted and will be automatically disqualified from further consideration.

The Commission assumes no responsibility for delays caused by applicant's technical difficulties, network problems, or any other party.

All submitted documents become the property of the Commission and will not be returned. All submissions become public record.

Facsimile transmissions will not be accepted at any point in the process.

Application Contents

The application must contain information responding to all requirements in the New Charter School Application. The application and all documents that require a signature must be signed, or have an electronic verification, by an authorized representative of the applicant.

Failure to provide any information or required signatures may result in disqualification of the application.

Application Format and Organization

Applications must be written in English and submitted using the Commission designated, online application platform, Epicenter. Applicants should develop their application narrative in Microsoft Word (MS Word) format using Calibri size 11 font, and must complete all required templates and attachments, and upload completed documents via Epicenter.

Documents requiring signatures must be signed by a representative authorized to bind the applicant to their application. Documents that require signatures should be properly signed, completed, and scanned into a separate file in PDF format. Submit the signed, scanned PDF as well as a Word converted to PDF format without the signature when possible.

Cost of Application Preparation

Applicants are solely responsible for the costs associated with preparing and presenting an application, as well as any costs associated with participation in the application review process. The Commission will not reimburse applicants for any costs associated with this New Charter School Application.

Completeness Review

All applications will be reviewed for completeness before they are accepted and distributed to the evaluation teams. If an application is found to be incomplete (*i.e.*, missing responses to required application sections, certifications, assurances, attachments, signatures, etc.) or incorrectly formatted, the applicant will be notified of the specific errors or omissions and will have an opportunity to file corrections as long as they are filed with the Commission via Epicenter within 5 business days after the applicant's receipt of the notice of errors or omissions. Applicants will be notified of an application's completeness 7 business days after the due date. An application is filed on the date on which the corrections are filed with the Commission. If the application is filed by an entity that is not eligible to apply, or the application, after an opportunity to correct, does not contain all required information, the Commission shall reject the application. It should be noted that *findings of completion* are not indicative of the *quality* of the application.

Waiver of Minor Administrative Irregularities

The Commission reserves the right to waive minor administrative irregularities contained in any application.

Errors in Application

Applicants are liable for all errors or omissions contained in their applications. Applicants will not be allowed to alter application documents after notification of completeness. Applicants who become aware of a material error in their application documents must notify the Executive Director as soon as the error is discovered. The Commission is not liable for any such errors. The Commission reserves the right to contact the applicant for clarification of application contents, including through the Capacity Interview process.

Misrepresentations on Application

An application containing a material misrepresentation in the information or documentation submitted may be denied. A material misrepresentation includes, but is not limited to, one that is inaccurate or misleading, or a representation that, if accurately reported, could impact the rating that an applicant would receive on any applicable criteria. If, after a school is authorized, it is learned that the application contained a material misrepresentation, the resulting charter contract may be deemed null and void by the Commission.

Plagiarism

The content of an application must be a product of the applicant's own efforts and shall not be copied from other sources, except for quotes that are properly attributed. For applications containing material whose original source is not their own, the applicant must properly and completely attribute the material to its primary source and show that it has permission to utilize the material.

Plagiarism is strictly prohibited and will result in automatic disqualification of the application. If, after a school is authorized, it is learned that a portion of the application was plagiarized, the resulting charter contract may be deemed null and void by the Commission.

Due Diligence

The decision to approve an application to open and operate a charter public school requires a thorough vetting of the applicant and the components of the application. The Commission may engage in due diligence to verify and evaluate the information submitted as part of the evaluation process. Due diligence may include, but is not limited to:

1. Contacting individuals who may have knowledge about the information submitted and/or individuals associated with the applicant organization to evaluate the accuracy and validity of the information provided in the application; and
2. Review of information and documentation obtained from external sources to evaluate the accuracy and validity of the information provided in the application.

Relevant information gleaned through this due diligence process will be reduced to writing in a due diligence report and provided to the evaluation team and the Commission for use in determining whether the application meets the criteria for approval.

Amendments and Revisions

The Commission reserves the right to revise the *Timeline* or other portions of this New Charter School Application at any time. The Commission may correct errors in this document (identified either by the Commission or an applicant). Any changes or corrections will be by one or more written amendment(s), dated, and posted with this New Charter School Application at www.maine.gov/csc.

Applicants are responsible for checking this site for changes and should do so frequently. The Commission will not be responsible for notifying applicants of changes in any other manner. All changes must be authorized and issued in writing by the Executive Director. If there is any conflict between amendments, or between an amendment and the New Charter School Application, whichever document was issued last in time shall be controlling.

No Obligation to Contract

The Commission may deny applications that fail to meet statutory or authorizer requirements. The Commission also reserves the right to refrain from selecting or contracting with all applicants. The Commission may not approve more than one new school application at this time.

Withdrawal of Application

Applicants may withdraw an application that has been submitted by April 7, 2025. To accomplish application withdrawal, a written request signed by an authorized representative of the applicant must be submitted to the Executive Director. Withdrawn applications and related materials may remain on the Commission's website.

Failure to respond to the Commission according to the Timeline below, or failure to respond to an inquiry or communication from the Commission to the applicant's designated representative, shall be deemed a withdrawal.

Electronic Availability

The contents of this New Charter School Application and any amendments or revisions and written answers to questions will be available at www.maine.gov/csc. Updates will be made to the online submission portal consistent with any amendments or revisions. **Applicants are responsible for checking this site for notices and changes and should do so frequently.**

Revisions to the New Charter School Application

In the event it becomes necessary to revise any part of this New Charter School Application, addenda will be published at www.maine.gov/csc. Updates will be made to the online submission portal consistent with any amendments or revisions.

The Commission also reserves the right to cancel or reissue the New Charter School Application in whole, or in part, prior to execution of a contract.

Terms and Provision of the Sample Contract

Submission of an Application constitutes acceptance of the solicitation contents, and the sample charter contract constitutes acceptance of all terms and requirements stated therein. The sample charter contract is located on the Commission's website at www.maine.gov/csc

INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDELINES

Opening a new charter school that is prepared to be successful on day one requires investment in a thoughtful process to address the requirements to ensure a highly effective charter school. This New Charter School Application requires information that will allow the Commission to consider and determine if the application presents a school that is sufficiently well planned and researched, has a compelling and rigorous academic model, and is fiscally and operationally sound. This New Charter School Application seeks information that will allow the Commission to assess the capacity of the founding team to successfully implement the proposed plan.

For a thorough and rigorous review to occur, all applicants must respond to all questions and requests for information contained in this New Charter School Application. Failure to address all questions will result in the application being deemed incomplete.

Applicants are encouraged to reference the New Charter School Application Evaluation Rubric (for schools opening in 2026-2027) when preparing their applications to ensure that the responses not only answer the items below, but also address all the evaluation rubric criteria. For information on how approved schools will be evaluated once they have opened, applicants should reference the Commission's performance framework, which is available on the Commission's website at www.maine.gov/csc.

All applicants must submit an Intent to Apply using Epicenter, the online submission portal, prepared using the template provided on Epicenter, no later than **5:00 pm EST on July 15, 2024**. Once the Commission receives an applicant's Intent to Apply, the applicant will receive access to the full RFP on Epicenter. If an Intent to Apply is not received by the deadline, the applicant may not submit an application.

Applications must be submitted no later than **5:00 pm EDT on February 13, 2025**. Commission rules governing the application and approval process are incorporated by reference and available on the Commission's website. All applicants must submit their applications electronically via Epicenter. For the New Charter School Application for schools opening in 2026-2027, all electronic submissions must be uploaded to the Commission assigned Epicenter site by the deadline.

Learning Opportunities

The Maine Charter School Commission will conduct a New Charter School Application Orientation designed to support prospective charter school applicants on **Tuesday, August 6, 2024**, via Webinar. Information on how to access the Webinar will be posted to the Maine Charter School

Commission website. The purpose of this orientation is to deepen understanding of:

1. The Commission's expectations as articulated in the New Charter School Application;
2. How to access Epicenter, the online submission portal;
3. How applications will be evaluated;
4. The purpose and format of the Capacity Interview and Public Forum; and
5. Changes that have occurred to the New Charter School Application since the last cycle.

Additional orientations will be planned after the submission deadline for the letter of intent to apply. These sessions are intended to address questions of clarification about the application. They are not to evaluate the content of your proposal. They will be scheduled, and the dates and times will be on the Commission website. Access to these sessions will be virtual. They will be recorded and available on the Commission website.

Components of the Application & Application Process

Narrative Application

The application is the formal application to the Commission and is a comprehensive description of the school's educational, organizational, and financial plans.

Attachments

Throughout the application, specific documents are requested in addition to narrative answers. A comprehensive list of the attachments is provided on pages 15-17.

Commission Meeting April 8, 2025

The Commission will receive the review team recommendation as to whether the applicant has thus far demonstrated the capacity to open a successful school and should continue to the next interview and public hearing. This will be followed by a discussion and vote of the Commission.

Capacity Interviews April 9-21, 2025

Applicants will be expected to participate in an interview to demonstrate the team's capacity to open and maintain a high-quality charter school, as well as to answer specific questions about their application.

Commission Interviews April 27-May 7, 2025

Applicants approved by vote at the April 8, 2025, Commission meeting to continue in the application process will be expected to participate in an interview with the Commission regarding the application. Applicants will be given at least five business days' notice prior to the Commission interview date.

Public Hearing April 27-May 7, 2025

The public hearing will provide an opportunity for the applicant and the Commission to hear the input from the public on the expected impact of the proposed charter school on students, parents, the community to be served by the school, and public education in the State as well as for the public to learn more about the application. While the public forum is not evaluated, information gleaned from this process may be used to evaluate the applicant. Applicants will be given at least five business days' notice prior to the scheduled public interview date.

Commission Meeting May 13, 2025

Applicants are invited to attend the Commission's May 13, 2025, meeting where they will be allowed to provide a short presentation (no longer than 5 minutes) regarding their application. At this meeting the Commission shall vote to approve, conditionally approve, or deny the application.

Electronic Submission Instructions

- 1. Applicants may begin writing their application narrative and completing the associated attachments and templates as MS Word documents.** Each section of the RFP has a corresponding "task" in Epicenter, the online document submission portal, where it must be uploaded. The applicant must populate the required templates, as well as upload associated attachments of the application to Epicenter by the deadline.
- 2.** Applicants should populate each template and upload each section attachment to its corresponding Epicenter "task." **Applicants must ensure that documents are uploaded in the file format specified.** An overview of how to use Epicenter will be included in the training sessions referenced in the section titled *Learning Opportunities*.
- 3.** Applicants are responsible for ensuring that only their FINAL application narrative, attachments and required templates are uploaded to Epicenter by the noted deadline. The application will be both submitted and locked at 5:00 pm EDT February 13, 2025. If the applicant has uploaded its application prior to the application deadline and desires to make additional revisions prior to the application deadline, the applicant may do so.
- 4. The Commission will automatically lock access to all applicant Epicenter files and applications at 5:00 pm EDT February 13, 2025.** Applications not uploaded, including applications that are partially uploaded, will not be accepted after this point.

Specifications

1. Applicants **MUST** submit applications electronically through Epicenter with the access granted by the Commission, and must use the following templates (available on Epicenter):
 - a. Cover Sheet Template (Sections A-E);
 - b. Charter School Board Member Information and Disclosure Form Template (Section 17: Attachment 12);
 - c. Board Member Initial Background Check Certification Template (Section 17: Attachment 13);
 - d. Staffing Chart Template (Section 22: Attachment 17);
 - e. Start-up plan Template (Section 25: Attachment 22);
 - f. Financial Plan Workbook (Section 26: Attachment 24);
 - g. Portfolio Summary Template (Section 28: Attachment 31) – EXISTING OPERATORS ONLY.
2. **Page limits must be followed. Applications exceeding the stated page limits will be rejected.**
3. If a particular section or question does not apply to the applicant team or application, respond “Not Applicable” AND state the rationale.
4. All required attachments should be uploaded in the file format specified (PDF, unless otherwise indicated).
5. Any footnotes made *within a section* of the application will be added into that section’s page count.
6. The following is a table of attachments to accompany the application and their associated category and section. Note that not all attachments will be applicable to all applicants. Attachments must be labeled by Section and Attachment number. As examples, Section 5: Attachment 2, Section 6: Attachment 4. All Attachments must be uploaded directly to the applicant’s Epicenter site. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure they submit all relevant attachments.

Category 1: General Information	
Section A: School Information	No Attachments (use template)
Section B: Primary Contact Person	No Attachments (use template)
Section C: Enrollment Projections	No Attachments (use template)

Section D: Current and Prospective Board Member Roster	No Attachments (use template)
Section E: Start-Up Team	No Attachments (use template)
Category 2: Executive Summary	
Section 1: Executive Summary	No Attachments
Category 3: Mission/Vision/Student Population/Community Engagement	
Section 2: Mission/Vision	<u>Attachment 1</u> : Evidence of community support/engagement in the application process.
Section 3: Student Population/Need and Demand/Community Engagement	No Attachments
Category 4: Educational Program Design	
Section 4: Program Overview	No Attachments
Section 5: Curriculum and Instructional Design	<u>Attachment 2</u> : Course scope and sequence <u>Attachment 3</u> : Curriculum development plan (if applicable)
Section 6: Assessment and Data	No Attachments
Section 7: Student Performance Standards	<u>Attachment 4</u> : Exit standards for graduating students or students completing the last year in that school.
Section 8: School Calendar and Schedule	<u>Attachment 5</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Year 1 of operation school calendar; ▪ Daily schedule; and Daily and weekly schedule
Section 9: School Culture and Discipline Policy	<u>Attachment 6</u> : Discipline policy
Section 10: Supplemental Programming	No Attachments
Section 11: Special Populations and At-Risk Students	No Attachments
Section 12: Family and Community Engagement	<u>Attachment 7</u> : any MOU, contract, or letter of intent to partner.
Category 5: Operations Plan	
Section 13: Student Recruitment and Enrollment	<u>Attachment 8</u> : Enrollment policy
Section 14: Legal Status and Governing Documents	<u>Attachment 9</u> : Governance documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Articles of Incorporation; ▪ Bylaws; ▪ Proof of nonprofit status; and ▪ Other governing documents
Section 15: Growth Plan	No Attachments
Section 16: Organization Structure and Partnerships	<u>Attachment 10</u> : Organizational charts <u>Attachment 11</u> : Copies of Proposed Contracts

Section 17: Governing Board	<p><u>Attachment 12</u>: Board member documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completed and signed board member Information and Disclosure Forms (use template); and ▪ Board member Resumes <p><u>Attachment 13</u>: Initial Background Certification for each board member and school leader (use template)</p> <p><u>Attachment 14</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Code of Ethics Policy; and ▪ Conflict of Interest Policy
Section 18: Advisory Bodies	No Attachments
Section 19: Grievance Complaint Process	No Attachments
Section 20: District Partnerships	<u>Attachment 15</u> : If available, MOU or other partnership documentation (i.e. letters of support/partnership, etc.)
Section 21: Education Service Providers (ESP)	<u>Attachment 16</u> : ESP contract term sheet
Section 22: Staffing Plans, Hiring, Management, and Evaluation	<p><u>Attachment 17</u>: Staffing chart (use template)</p> <p><u>Attachment 18</u>: Leadership evaluation tools</p> <p><u>Attachment 19</u>: Teacher evaluation tools</p>
Section 23: Professional Development	<u>Attachment 20</u> : Professional development schedule
Section 24: Facilities	<u>Attachment 21</u> : Facility documents
Section 25: Start-up and Ongoing Operations	<p><u>Attachment 22</u>: Start-up plan</p> <p><u>Attachment 23</u>: Insurance coverage</p>
Category 6: Financial Plan	
Section 26: Financial Plan	<p><u>Attachment 24</u>: Financial plan workbook</p> <p><u>Attachment 25</u>: Budget narrative</p> <p><u>Attachment 26</u>: Evidence of philanthropic funding commitments noted in budget</p> <p><u>Attachment 27</u>: Fundraising plan</p> <p><u>Attachment 28</u>: Recent internal financial statements, if applicable</p> <p><u>Attachment 29</u>: Independent financial audit reports and management letters, if applicable (use template)</p>
Category 7: Existing Operators	
Section 27: Existing Operators	<u>Attachment 30</u> : Portfolio Summary Template
Category 8: Capacity	
Section 28: Team Capacity	<p><u>Attachment 31</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School leader resume and/or job description; and ▪ Plan for recruiting and hiring strong and capable school leader

7. When submitting resumes, label each document with the individual’s affiliation with the proposed school (Board member, School Leader, teacher, etc.).
8. Review all elements of the application for completeness before submitting.
9. Late or incorrectly formatted applications will not be accepted.

New School Application Timeline*

The table below represents the timeline for the New Charter School Application process. The deadlines and due dates are mandatory and nonnegotiable for applicants. Failure to meet the New Charter School Application submission deadline will result in disqualification from participation. All times are Eastern Time (ET). The Commission reserves the right to revise the timeline; in the event of a change, this Timeline will be posted on the Commission’s website at www.maine.gov/csc. All Applicants will receive email notification.

Date	Activity
July 1, 2024	New Charter School RFP Release
March – July 2024 (First Tuesday of each month)	New Charter School Application Information Session: Q+A sessions designed to support prospective charter school applicants.
July 15, 2024, by 5:00 pm EST	Intent to Apply due via Epicenter, the online submission portal
July 16, 2024	Online submission portal, Epicenter, opens to entities that submitted the Intent to Apply by the deadline. Proposals will only be accepted via Epicenter.
August 6, 2024	New Charter School Application Orientation: An orientation designed to support prospective charter school applicants. The purpose of this orientation is to deepen understanding of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Commission’s expectations as articulated in the New Charter School Application; 2) How to access Epicenter, the online submission portal 3) How applications will be evaluated; 4) The purpose and format of Public Forums; and Changes that have occurred to the RFP since last cycle.
February 13, 2025, by 5:00 pm EDT	Proposal deadline
February 20, 2025	Completeness findings debriefs/notifications
February 25, 2025, 5:00 pm EDT	Deadline for eligible Applicants to submit Corrections to Proposals
April 9-21, 2025	Capacity Interviews. Interviews will ONLY be held on these days; applicants are requested to keep the dates entirely open in their calendars. Applicants will be notified of their assigned interview date and time as soon as possible. Due to significant logistical challenges, it is unlikely that any changes to assigned interview times will be possible.
April 8, 2025	Commission Meeting. Commission will receive review team recommendation as to whether the applicant has thus far demonstrated the capacity to open a successful school and should continue to the next interview and public hearing. This will be followed by a discussion and vote of the Commission.
April 27 – May 7 2025	Public Hearings and Commission Interviews. These will ONLY be held on these days; applicants are requested to keep the dates entirely open in their calendars. Applicants will be notified of their assigned hearing date and time as soon as possible. Due to significant logistical challenges, it is unlikely that any changes to assigned interview times will be possible.
April 7, 2025, 5:00 pm EDT	Deadline for application withdrawal
May 13, 2025	Commission Meeting. Commission will approve or deny charter school applications. Applicants are invited to attend the Commission Meeting where they will be allowed to provide a short presentation regarding their application.
June 2026	Deadline for final contracts to be signed

*Dates, times, locations, and activities subject to change.

CATEGORY 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

Section A: School Information

1. School Name;
2. School Type (Elementary, Elementary/Middle, Middle, Junior High, Middle/High, High);
3. Grade Levels Served (pre-K, K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12);
4. Total number of students in Year 1 and at full enrollment;
5. School District;
6. Community;
7. Phone;
8. Fax;
9. Website Address;
10. Street Address;
11. Sponsoring Entity (Nonprofit Organization);**
12. Open Date;
13. Contracted Educational Service Provider (ESP), if applicable;
14. Calendar Type (Standard or Extended School Year); and
15. Number of Instructional Days.

Section B: Primary Contact Person

1. Name;
2. Position;
3. Address;
4. Mobile Phone;
5. Alternate Phone;
6. Email address; and
7. Current Employer.

**In Maine, a “charter school applicant” must be “a nonprofit, nonreligious organization. If the organizers of a start-up public charter school have been affiliated with a previous school or education program, they must form a separate nonprofit organization in this State to be eligible for state and federal grants.” (20-A M.R.S.A. § 2407(3))

Section C: Enrollment Projections

Complete the template provided. This table is derived from the applicant's School Information in Section A regarding grades served. The number of students must include the target number per grade.

Section D: Current and Prospective Board Member Roster

Complete the template provided

1. Name;
2. Title on Board;
3. Contact (Phone & Email Address);
4. Mailing Address; and
5. Current Employer.

Section E: Start-Up Team

Complete the template provided

1. Name;
2. Title/Position on Start-up Team;
3. Contact (Phone & Email Address);
4. Mailing Address; and
5. Current Employer.

DRAFT

CATEGORY 2: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Section 1: Executive Summary

The Executive Summary should provide a concise summary (2-3 pages) that address the following:

1. Why are you seeking to open a public charter school and what problem you are addressing by starting this school?
2. State the grade levels and number of students to be served by the school.
3. State the proposed location of the school and catchment area. Provide rationale for selecting the school location, grade levels served, and student body. Be explicit in the rationale for the location and its alignment to the evidence of educational need, anticipated student population and challenges. (20-A M.R.S.A. § 2404).
4. Provide a high-level overview of the educational approach and key design elements of the school.
5. Summarize the relevant experience of the school's founders.
6. If the applicant is planning to open their school in the fall of 2027, please provide a rationale for this request. An applicant must describe the circumstances surrounding the proposed delay in opening the school.

CATEGORY 3: MISSION/VISION/STUDENT POPULATION/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Section 2: Mission/Vision

This section should provide a concise summary of the following:

1. **Plan, Mission, Vision:** The mission and vision statements provide the foundation for the entire application. The mission and vision statements, taken together, should:
 - a. Identify the students and community to be served;
 - b. Articulate the objectives and goals for the school;
 - c. Illustrate what success will look like; and
 - d. Align with the purposes of the Maine charter school law (20-A M.R.S.A., Chapter 112) and the Commission's stated priorities for new schools (20-A M.R.S.A. § 2406(2)).
- **State the mission of the school.** The mission is a statement of the fundamental purpose of the school, describing why it exists.
- **State the school's vision.** The vision statement outlines how the school will operate and what it will achieve in the long term.
- **Evaluation:** How will the school evaluate the extent to which its mission is being achieved and its vision realized?
- **Core Purpose(s):** Identify the core purpose(s) of this school consistent with Maine charter school law (20-A.M.R.S.A, Chapter 112, §2402).
- Include, as **Attachment 1**, existing evidence of support from intended students, families and/or community partners, such as letters of intent/commitment, memoranda of understanding, and/or contracts.
- Specifically describe the applicant's ties to and/or knowledge of the target community.

Section 3: Student Population/Need and Demand/Community Engagement

The information in this section should provide evidence of a cohesive and compelling rationale for creating a new school in the intended community that is responsive to and reflective of the aspirations and needs of that community.

1. Provide a definition of the community your school seeks to serve, including a demographic analysis of the identified community, and the proposed geographic location of the school.
 2. Describe the proposed student population the school seeks to serve, including
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demographics. Include a rationale for the number of students, grade levels, student demographics, and the basis for growth plan in the enrollment attendance projection (Section C of Category 1).

- 3.** Provide evidence of ongoing community engagement in the development of this application, including the approaches and strategies used by the application team to learn about the community, understand its unique needs and assets, gather input on the proposed educational program, school culture, after-school programs, etc. Evidence includes a description of community stakeholders involved in engagement activities and information on discussions with school administrative unit(s) and communities in the proposed school's catchment area concerning recruitment and operations of the proposed public charter school, and possible collaboration with nearby school administrative units; multiple and varied engagement opportunities and strategies (e.g., radio, written materials, public meeting/hearing, direct outreach, community activities, etc.) relevant for the intended community; and an explanation of how access to opportunities were equitable based on: times; locations; community diversity; inclusion of under-resourced students and families, including students with disabilities and English Learners; first language of community members.
- 4.** Provide evidence of need for this new school. Need may refer to academic need (performance of comparative schools in the community demonstrates a need for high-quality options), programmatic need (need for more or different educational program options in the community); access need (insufficient number of seats in existing schools that deliver strong results for students and/or the proposed educational programming); or enrollment need (a growth in the student population and a need for more seats in the community).
- 5.** Provide evidence for demand for this new school. Demand refers to the intention or desire of a sufficient number of students and families to attend a new charter school to meet a school's expressed enrollment goals. Evidence may include objective market research; surveys or other measures of local demand; intent-to-enroll forms or similar commitments by families; expected conversion rates of commitments to actual enrollment; or other.

CATEGORY 4: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM DESIGN

Section 4: Program Overview

The Program Overview should:

- Describe how the applicant will provide a program of basic education that meets the goals in the state’s expectations of learning as stated in Maine’s system of Learning Results, 20-A, M.R.S.A. § 6209, including instruction in the essential academic learning requirements and participates in the statewide student assessment system;
- Describe the basic learning environment (e.g., classroom-based, independent study);
- Provide the Educational Program Terms, including the key design elements of the school model;
- Provide evidence that the educational program or key design elements of the program are based on proven methods. Provide evidence that the proposed educational program has a sound base in research, theory, and/or experience, and has been or is likely to be rigorous, engaging, and effective for the anticipated student population. Include reference to other schools that have exhibited success with this program or one that is substantially similar, or that have inspired this new school design; and
- Highlight the culturally responsive aspects of the program.

The Educational Program Terms identify the characteristics of the essential components of the educational program that the applicant considers critical to the school’s success *and* for which the applicant is prepared to be held accountable to the Commission and the public through inclusion in the charter contract. The Commission’s oversight and evaluation of the proposed school’s educational program includes assessment of the implementation of the program’s key design elements and educational program terms. **Applicants should identify no fewer than three and no more than five Educational Program Terms.**

The Educational Program Terms should be *minimum* expectations. Applicants need not – and should not – include all the things that they want the school to be. Rather, applicants should include a set of minimum measurable programmatic components that will enable the Commission to objectively validate that the program the proposed school is offering is fundamentally consistent with what the school is advertised to be.

Articulate the Educational Program Terms in a way that indicates the objective measurable evidence that can be used to determine whether the proposed school has met the expectations. Avoid general statements about the school culture or learning environment. **Focus on specific, measurable components** that will establish that culture or learning environment.

The Educational Program Terms will become an attachment to the charter contract. It will not replace the Commission's ultimate focus on performance standards set out in the Academic Performance Framework.

Note: The Educational Program Terms focus on *process* rather than student *outcomes*. Educational Program Terms should capture the essentials of what students will *experience*. See the Commission's website for examples of Educational Program Terms. Refer to the document titled Sample Educational Program Terms.

Section 5: Curriculum and Instructional Design

Propose a framework for instructional design that both reflects the needs of the anticipated population and ensures that all students will meet or exceed the state standards. The Commission will evaluate the performance of every charter school annually and for renewal purposes according to the Performance Framework. Per 20-A M.R.S.A. § 2409, the Performance Framework is a set of academic, financial, and organizational performance standards. The academic performance standards will consider proficiency status, growth, and comparative performance based on federal and state measures. The financial performance standards will be based on standard accounting and industry standards for sound financial operation. The organizational performance standards will be based primarily on compliance with legal obligations, including fulfillment of the governing board's fiduciary obligations related to sound governance.

1. Give an overview of the planned curriculum. Identify course outcomes and demonstrate alignment with applicable state standards. Provide, as **Attachment 2**, a sample course scope and sequence for one subject in one grade of each division (elementary, middle, high school) the school will serve.
2. If the curriculum is fully developed, summarize curricular choices such as textbook selection, by subject, and the rationale for each. Provide evidence that these curricula will be appropriate and effective for the anticipated student population. Provide evidence that the curriculum is vertically and horizontally aligned for all grades the school will serve. Include evidence that the curriculum is culturally responsive and free of bias (i.e., racial, gender, etc.).

-OR-

If the curriculum is not already developed, provide, as **Attachment 3**, a plan for how the curriculum will be developed between approval of the application and the opening of the school, including key considerations for curriculum development and/or selection, who will be responsible and when key stages will be completed. Describe how the curriculum will be vertically and horizontally aligned for all grades the school will serve; and how the curriculum will be appropriate and effective for the anticipated student population.

Include a description of how the school will develop a curriculum that is culturally responsive and free of bias (i.e., racial, gender, etc.).

3. Describe the primary instructional strategies that the school will expect teachers to use. Include evidence that these strategies are culturally responsive and well-suited for the anticipated student population.
4. Describe the processes, methods and systems teachers will have for providing differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students.

Section 6: Assessment and Data

1. In addition to all mandatory state and Commission assessments (NWEA), identify the primary interim and/or formative assessments the school will use to assess student learning needs and progress throughout the year. Be sure to address how the school will participate in all state required assessments.
2. Describe in detail how the school will measure and evaluate academic progress (of individual students, student cohorts, and the school as a whole) throughout the school year, at the end of each academic year, and for the term of the charter contract.
3. Describe how the school will collect and analyze student academic achievement data, use the data to refine and improve instruction, and report the data to the school community. Identify the person(s), position(s), and/or entities that will be responsible and involved in the collection and analysis of assessment data.
4. Identify the person(s) or position(s) and/or entities responsible for managing the data, including collection, disaggregation, and analysis of all assessment data with and for classroom teachers.

Section 7: Student Performance Standards

Responses to the following items regarding the proposed school's student performance standards must be consistent with Maine's system of Learning Results, Common Core State Standards. High schools will be expected to meet Maine's graduation standards, MRS Title 20-A section 4722 High School Diploma Standards, section 4723 Health and Physical Education, section 4724 Computer Instruction, and section 4722-A as amended.

1. If the school plans to adopt or develop additional academic standards beyond the state standards, provide an explanation of the types of standards (content areas, grade levels). Be sure

to highlight and describe how the proposed standards exceed the state standards.

2. Explain the school policies and standards for promoting students from one grade to the next.
3. Describe how and when promotion and graduation criteria will be communicated in a culturally responsive manner to parents/guardians and students.
4. Provide, as **Attachment 4**, the school's exit standards for graduating students or students completing the last grade in that school. These exit standards should clearly set forth what students in the last grade served will know and be able to do and meet or exceed all state grade level expectations.
5. High Schools Only: Describe how the school will meet the requirements described in **Attachment 4**. Explain how students will earn credit hours, how grade-point averages will be calculated, what information will be on transcripts, how the student would meet standards and the requirements for a proficiency-based diploma and what elective courses will be offered. If graduation requirements for the school will exceed state standards, explain the additional requirements.
6. High Schools Only: Explain how the graduation requirements will ensure student readiness for college or other postsecondary opportunities (e.g., technical school, industry certification, military service, or entering the workforce).
7. High Schools Only: Explain the systems and structures the school will implement for students at risk of dropping out and/or not meeting the proposed graduation requirements.

Section 8: School Calendar and Schedule

1. Describe the annual academic schedule for the school. Explain and demonstrate how the calendar reflects the needs of the educational program. In **Attachment 5**, provide the school's proposed calendar for the first year of operation, including the total number of instructional days and hours, holidays, make-up days in case of inclement weather, and state assessment days. The application must provide the formula or calculation for the total annual number of instructional hours/days and daily allocation of time for core instruction, supplemental instruction, extra-curricular and after school activities, as applicable. If the school will use a snow-day make-up program, describe how this program will work and be comparable to a normal school day.
2. Describe the structure of the school day and week. Include the number of instructional hours/minutes in a day for core subjects, such as language arts, mathematics, science, and social

studies. Note the length of the school day, including start and dismissal times. Explain why the school's daily and weekly schedule will be optimal for student learning. Provide the minimum number of hours/minutes per day and week that the school will devote to academic instruction in each grade. Provide, also in **Attachment 5**, a sample daily and weekly schedule for each division of the school.

Section 9: School Culture and Discipline Policy

1. Describe the culture of the proposed school. Explain how it will promote a positive and culturally inclusive academic environment, reinforce student intellectual and social development, respond to, and prevent bullying and harassment, including the strategies the school will employ to develop and sustain a safe and supportive school climate that supports fulfillment of the educational goals. Include reference to other schools that exhibit the culture you seek to develop and/or implement similar strategies successfully.
2. Describe how the school will create and implement this culture for students, teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians starting from the first day of school. Describe the plan for enculturating students who enter the school mid-year.
3. Describe the specific programs or strategies the school will employ to address mental, emotional, and social development and health for all students, and describe how these strategies will be culturally responsive.
4. If applicable, describe any other student-focused activities and programs that are integral to the educational and student-development plans.
5. Describe and demonstrate how the school culture will be culturally responsive and take account of and serve students with special needs, including students receiving special education services, English Learners (ELs), and any students at risk of academic failure.
6. Describe a student experience during a typical school day from the perspective of a student in a grade/age span that will be served in the school's first year of operation. Instead of school day schedules or logistics, name three feelings with which a student will leave the school at the end of the day. How are the identified feelings cultivated throughout the day? Provide specific examples.
7. Describe a teacher experience during a typical school day. Instead of school day schedules or logistics, name three feelings with which a teacher will leave the school at the end of the day.

How are the identified feelings cultivated throughout the day? Provide specific examples.

8. Describe the school's discipline philosophy and address how it will support the culture described above. Provide, as **Attachment 6**, the school's proposed discipline policy. The proposed policy must be culturally responsive and comply with any applicable state laws and Commission policies, including, but not limited to 20-A M.R.S.A. §1001(8-A), (9-A thru 9-D) (15), and (15-A). The plan should provide evidence that it is based on research, theory, experience, or best practice. The description of the school's approach and the proposed policy should address each of the following:
 - a. Equitable and fair practices the school will use to promote good discipline, including both penalties for infractions and incentives for positive behavior;
 - b. Types of offenses for which students in the school must (where nondiscretionary) and may (where discretionary) be suspended or expelled, respectively;
 - c. An explanation of how the school will take into account the rights of students with disabilities in disciplinary actions and proceedings;
 - d. Highlight how the school will address potential disproportionate discipline rates based on race, ethnicity, gender, etc.; and
 - e. Procedures for due process when a student is suspended or expelled because of a code of conduct violation, including a description of the appeal process that the school will employ for students facing expulsion and a plan for providing services to students who are expelled or out of school for more than ten days.
 - f. Describe how students and parents/guardians will be informed of the school's discipline policy.

Section 10: Supplemental Programming

1. If summer school will be offered, describe the program(s). If you plan to provide summer school, it should be evident in the budget.
2. Describe any extra- or co-curricular activities or programming the school will offer. Evidence of extra- or co-curricular activities should be included in the budget.
3. Describe the plan for outreach to parents to apprise them of supplemental programming opportunities. Describe how this plan will be culturally inclusive.

Section 11: Special Populations and At-Risk Students

Schools are responsible for hiring licensed and endorsed special educators pursuant to federal and state

law. Schools must engage in Child find activities; identify and refer students for assessment; convene Individual Education Program Teams (IEP Teams) to determine eligibility and develop Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for eligible students; and provide the delivery of special education and related services in the least restrictive environment (LRE), as appropriate. All responses should indicate how the school will comply with applicable laws and regulations governing service to these student populations.

As public schools, charter schools may not discriminate based on disability. Admissions and enrollment practices must be consistent with federal and state law requirements. Charter schools who engage in “counseling out,” or discouraging parents from applying to a charter school for their child by suggesting that their child will not receive the services they are entitled to by law if they attend the charter school, are violating the law.

Maine Unified Special Education Regulations (MUSER) related notations can be found at:

<https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.do/files/inlinefiles/State%20Regulation%20Chapter%20101MUSER.pdf>

Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) notations can be found at: <http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=%2Findex.tpl>.

1. Specifically explain how the school will identify and meet the learning needs of students with mild, moderate, and severe disabilities in the least restrictive environment possible. Specify the programs, strategies, and supports the school will provide, including the following:
 - a. Methods for identifying students with special education needs and avoiding misidentification (Child find);
 - b. Specific scientifically research-based interventions the school will provide to support the identification of needs for students with disabilities;
 - c. Specific instructional programs, practices, and strategies the school will employ to provide a continuum of services, ensure students’ access to the general education curriculum, and ensure academic, social, emotional, and functional success for students with special education needs;
 - d. Plans for monitoring and evaluating the academic, social, emotional, and functional performance progress and success of special education students with mild, moderate, and severe needs to ensure the attainment of each student’s goals as set forth in the IEP;
 - e. Plans for developing, monitoring, and evaluating the progress and success of supports and services for students with disabilities as set forth in 504 Plans;
 - f. Plans for promoting graduation for students with special education needs (high schools only); and
 - g. Plans to provide adequate qualified staffing for the anticipated special needs population that includes the services of a special education director or assistant director.

2. Charter school will meet the needs of English learners, including abiding by the following:

- The charter school will identify and place English learners in the English language development program (ESEA Sec. 8101(20));
- The charter school will make available to all English learners a transitional bilingual instructional program or, if the use of two languages is not practicable, an alternative instructional program (Maine Department of Education Legal Requirements to Provide English Language Acquisition Services to English Learners);
- The charter school will monitor and evaluate the academic progress and success of English learners, including the exiting of students from EL services (ESEA Sec. 3121(a)(b)(c) ; and Letter #11 Legal Requirements to Provide English Language Acquisition Services to English Learners);
- The charter school will provide adequate, qualified staffing for English learners (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 34 CFR §100.3); and
- The charter school will meet the parent notification requirements for families of English learners (Letter #11 Legal Requirements to Provide English Language Acquisition Services to English Learners).

Specifically explain how the school will identify and meet the learning needs of English learners. Specify the programs, strategies, and supports the school will provide?

3. Explain how the school will meet the needs of homeless students and students in foster care. The Maine Department of Education and Maine schools follow the provisions of the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which aims to minimize the educational disruptions experienced by homeless students.
4. Explain how the school will identify and meet the learning needs of at-risk students as defined 20-A M.R.S.A. §2401(1):

“At-risk pupil” means a pupil who has an economic or academic disadvantage that requires special services and assistance to enable the student to succeed in educational programs. “At-risk pupil” includes, but is not limited to, pupils who are members of economically disadvantaged families, pupils who are identified as having special educational needs, pupils who are limited in English proficiency, pupils who are at risk of dropping out of high school and pupils who do not meet minimum standards of academic proficiency.”
5. Describe how the school will identify and meet the needs of gifted and talented students, including the following:
 - a. Specific research-based instructional programs, practices, strategies, and opportunities the school will employ or provide to enhance their abilities;
 - b. Plans for monitoring and evaluating the academic progress and success of intellectually gifted students; and
 - c. Plans for providing qualified staffing for intellectually gifted students.

Section 12: Family and Community Involvement

1. Describe the specific role to date of the parents/guardians and community members involved in developing the proposed school. Describe and provide evidence of how the school has assessed and built parent/guardian and community demand for the proposed school. Include information on discussions with the school administrative unit(s) (SAU) where the public charter school will be located. These should include recruitment and operations of the public charter school and possible collaborations with the nearby SAUs.
2. Describe how the school will engage parents/guardians in the life of the school and share how this plan will be culturally inclusive. Explain the plan for building family-school partnerships that strengthen support for learning and encourage parental involvement. Describe in detail any commitments or volunteer activities the school will seek from or offer to parents/guardians.
3. Describe the community resources that will be available to students and families. Describe any existing and/or anticipated partnerships or contractual relationships the school has or will have with community-based organizations, including those that serve culturally specific populations, businesses, or other educational institutions. Specify the nature, purposes, terms, and scope of services of any such partnerships, including any fee-based or in-kind commitments from community organizations or individuals that will enrich student learning opportunities. Include as Attachment 7 any MOU, contract, or letter of intent to partner.

CATEGORY 5: OPERATIONS PLAN

Section 13: Student Recruitment and Enrollment

1. Describe the school's plan for student recruitment and marketing and how it is culturally inclusive and will provide equitable access to interested students and families. Specifically describe the school's plan for outreach to families in poverty, academically low-achieving students, students with disabilities, English Learners, students of all income levels, and at-risk students. The plan must adhere to admissions and enrollment practices outlined in 20-A M.R.S.A. § 2404. Public charter school eligibility; enrollment.
2. Provide, as **Attachment 8**, the school's enrollment policy, which should demonstrate cultural inclusiveness and include the following:
 - a. Tentative dates for application period and enrollment deadlines and procedures, including an explanation of how the school will receive and process Intent to Enroll forms;
 - b. A timeline and plan for student recruitment/engagement and enrollment;
 - c. The lottery procedures that will be used should student interest exceed capacity. These lottery procedures shall be publicly noticed and open to the public; however, the school must grant enrollment preference to siblings of already enrolled students, with any remaining enrollments allocated through the lottery;
 - d. If applicable, how the school will offer enrollment preference for school's founders, governing board members and children of full-time employees of the school; and
 - e. Policies and procedures for student waiting lists, withdrawals, reenrollment, and transfers.

Section 14: Legal Status and Governing Documents

1. Describe the entity that will hold the charter and be responsible for governing the school. To be eligible for a charter from the Commission, the entity must be a Maine non-profit corporation and must have filed for status as a charitable organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or have received a notice of exemption. Provide documentation of the entity's legal status - including Articles of Incorporation, bylaws, and documentation of incorporation as a Maine non-profit corporation status.
 2. Submit, as **Attachment 9**:
 - a. Articles of Incorporation;
 - b. Proof of having status as a Maine nonprofit corporation and tax-exempt status (or copies of
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- filings for the preceding items or other evidence);
 - c. Bylaws; and
 - d. Other governing documents already adopted.
3. Describe any subsidiaries owned or affiliated with the nonprofit submitting this charter school application. Describe any other organizational/business endeavors in which the nonprofit that is submitting this charter school application is involved.

Section 15: Growth Plan

1. If the applicant does not already operate one or more schools, including applicants proposing to contract with ESPs, please describe organization's five-to-ten-year growth plan regarding the total number of charter schools it hopes to operate in Maine. Include discussion of the organization's capacity to successfully support and execute that plan, including business plans to support anticipated growth.

Section 16: Organization Structure and Partnerships

1. Submit, as **Attachment 10**, organization charts that show the school governance, management, staffing plan, and structure in:
 - a. The first year of school operations;
 - b. At the end of the charter term; and
 - c. When the school reaches full capacity, if in a year beyond the first charter term.

Each organization chart must clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of and lines of authority and reporting among the governing board, school leader, management team, staff, any related bodies (such as advisory bodies or parent/teacher councils), and any external organizations that will play a role in managing the school. The organization charts should also document clear lines of authority and reporting within the school.

2. Describe any other proposed contractual relationships that will be central to the school's operations or mission. Provide, as **Attachment 11**, copies of the proposed contract(s). Be sure to address and describe any services to be contracted, such as business services, payroll, auditing services, program management, and professional development, including the anticipated costs and criteria for selecting such service.

Section 17: Governing Board

a. Governing board. "Governing board" means the independent board of a public charter school that is party to the charter contract with the authorizer and whose members have been elected or selected pursuant to the school's application.

b. Public charter school. "Public charter school" means a public school formed pursuant to M.R.S.A Title 20-A, Chapter 112 that has autonomy over key decisions, including, but not limited to, decisions concerning finance, personnel, curriculum, and instruction.

c. The Governing Board must be independent having legal, fiduciary and oversight authority for the charter school with autonomy over key decisions, as referenced in MRS 20-A M.R.S.A. §2401 (6), (9A):

1. Describe the governance philosophy that will guide the board, including the nature and extent of involvement by key stakeholder groups.
 2. Describe the governance structure of the proposed school, including the primary roles of the governing board and how it will interact with the principal/head of school and any advisory bodies. Describe the size, current and desired composition, powers, and duties of the governing board. Identify key skills, areas of expertise, and constituencies that will be represented on the governing board.
 3. Explain how this governance structure and composition will help ensure that:
 - a. The school will be an educational, financial, and operational success;
 - b. The board will evaluate the success of the school, school leader and itself;
 - c. There will be active and effective representation of key stakeholders, including parents; and
 - d. The school will be a culturally responsive education system.
 4. For each current and proposed board member identified in Category 1 Section D (Board Member Roster), summarize each member's interests in and qualifications for serving on the school's board. In **Attachment 12**, on the template provided, provide the following documents for everyone identified:
 - a. Completed and signed Board Member Information and Disclosure Form;
 - b. Board member resume.
 5. In **Attachment 13**, on the template provided, provide the signed Initial Background Certification for each board member and school leader that has been initiated and will be completed within the timetables set forth in the Sample Contract: Start-up plan and Conditions.
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6. Explain the procedure by which board members have been and will be selected. Describe how often the board meets. Discuss the plans for any committee structure.
7. Describe plans for increasing the capacity of the governing board. Discuss how the board will expand and develop over time. Describe how new members will be recruited, and how vacancies will be filled. Describe the orientation or training new board members will receive, and the kinds of ongoing development/training existing board members will receive. The plan for training and development should include:
 - a. Participation requirements; and
 - b. Development of cultural competence.
8. If the current applicant team does not include the formal school governing board, explain how and when the transition to the formal governing board will take place.
9. If this application is being submitted by an existing nonprofit organization whose core mission is NOT the operation of charter schools, respond to the following:
 - a. Indicate whether the existing nonprofit board governs the new school;
 - b. To what extent the school will be a new nonprofit corporation governed by a separate board;
 - c. If the current nonprofit's board will govern the charter school, describe the steps taken to transform its board membership, mission, and bylaws to assume its new duties. Describe the plan and timeline for completing the transition and orienting the board to its new duties; and
 - d. If a new board has been formed, describe what, if anything, its ongoing relationship to the existing nonprofit's board will be. This should also be represented on the applicant's organizational chart.
10. Provide, as **Attachment 14**, the board's proposed:
 - a. Code of Ethics Policy; and
 - b. Conflict of Interest Policy.
11. Identify any existing relationships that could pose actual or perceived conflicts if the application is approved. Discuss specific steps that the board will take to avoid any actual conflicts and to mitigate perceived conflicts.

Section 18: Advisory Bodies

Describe any school advisory bodies or councils to be formed, including the role(s), duties, and authority of each. Describe the planned composition of the advisory body and the strategy/selection process for achieving that composition; the role of parents/guardians, students, and teachers (as applicable); and the reporting structure as it relates to the school's governing body and leadership.

Section 19: Grievance/Complaint Process

Describe in detail the established school process for resolving public complaints, including complaints regarding curriculum and/or parent or student objections to a governing board policy or decision, administrative procedure, or practice at the school. The process should include how the final administrative appeal is handled by the governing board.

Section 20: District Partnerships

Describe any district partnership activities and/or meetings during the application development process. If applicable, provide any proposed partnership agreement between the proposed charter school and the school administrative unit (SAU) where the school is proposed to be located. Include the terms of that agreement and/or partnership. As applicable provide, as **Attachment 15**, MOU or other partnership documentation (i.e., letters of support/partnership, etc.).

Section 21: Education Service Providers (ESP)

All applicants are asked to declare whether they intend to contract with an education service provider (ESP). The term "education service provider" refers to any number of organizations that contract with the Governing Board of a school to provide limited services. The major types of ESPs that serve charter schools are education management organizations (EMOs), charter management organizations (CMOs), and comprehensive school design providers.

For the purposes of this RFP, the Maine Charter School Commission defines an EMO or a CMO as any for- or non-profit corporation or LLC that enters into a contract with the entity holding the charter contract to provide significant managerial, technical, or financial personnel or services. Similarly, any for- or non-profit corporation or LLC that enters into a contract with the charter school entity that provides significant instructional materials or services including personnel shall be considered to be an ESP.

1. If the school intends to contract with an ESP for the management of the school for substantial educational services, address the following:
 - a. Provide evidence of the nonprofit ESP's success in serving student populations that are

- like the anticipated population, including demonstrated academic achievement, as well as successful management of nonacademic school functions, if applicable;
2. Disclose and explain any existing or potential conflicts of interest between the charter school board and proposed service provider or any affiliated business entities.
 3. As **Attachment 16**, provide a copy of the draft service contract that includes:
 - i. Proposed duration of the service contract;
 - ii. Roles and responsibilities of the governing board, school staff, and ESP;
 - iii. Scope of services and resources to be provided by the ESP;
 - iv. Performance evaluations measures and timelines;
 - v. Compensation structure, including clear identification of all fees to be paid to the ESP;
 - vi. Methods of contract oversight and enforcement;
 - vii. Investment disclosure; and
 - viii. Conditions for renewal and termination of the contract.

Section 22: Staffing Plans, Hiring, Management, and Evaluation

1. Describe the relationship that will exist between the proposed charter school and its employees, including whether the employees will be at-will and whether the school will use employment contracts. If the school will use contracts, explain the nature and purpose of the contracts.
2. Outline the proposed school's salary ranges and employment benefits for all employees, as well as any incentives or reward structures that may be part of the compensation system. Explain the school's strategy for retaining high-performing teachers.
3. Describe the school's strategy, plans, and timeline for recruiting and hiring the teaching staff, in accordance with the state rules and regulations regarding staff qualifications and accountability plan. Explain how this plan includes culturally inclusive hiring practices. Explain other key selection criteria and any special considerations relevant to the school's design.
4. Outline the process and timeline for conducting criminal background checks.
5. Provide, as **Attachment 17**, a completed staffing chart for the school, prepared using the template provided by the Commission. The staffing chart and accompanying notes or roster should identify the following:
 - a. Year one positions, as well as positions to be added during the five (5) year charter contract;
 - b. Administrative, instructional, and non-instructional personnel;
 - c. The number of classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, and specialty teachers; and

- d. Operational and support staff.
6. Explain how the school leader will be evaluated each school year. Provide, as **Attachment 18**, any leadership evaluation tool(s) that the applicant team has identified or developed already.
7. Explain how teachers and administrators will be evaluated each school year in accordance with the state accountability plan (Performance Evaluation and Professional Growth Systems (PEPG)). Provide, as **Attachment 19**, any teacher evaluation tool(s) that already exist for the school, or state if the school intends to follow the state teacher evaluation plan.
8. Explain how the school will meet the requirements of 20-A M.R.S.A. 2412(6)(B), including the method to be used to determine the qualifications of teachers who meet the advanced degree, professional certification, or unique expertise or experience in the curricular area in which they teach exception for certification.
9. Provide the job description for the principal/head of school.
10. For any positions not yet filled, provide a timeline, criteria, and process for recruitment and hiring. Please describe how this plan for recruitment and hiring will be culturally inclusive. Provide, as **Attachment 19**, the qualifications and resumes for the identified members of the leadership team, and for each position not yet filled, include job descriptions and qualifications.

Section 23: Professional Development

Describe the school's teacher and staff professional development expectations and opportunities, including the following:

1. Identify the person, position, or organization responsible for professional development.
2. Describe in detail the core components of teacher and staff professional development and how these components will support effective implementation of the proposed educational program. Please describe how the professional development plan will include the development and practice of cultural competence for all staff, as well as staff capacity in the collection, analysis, and use of performance data to improve student learning and evaluate the school's culture and climate. Discuss the extent to which the professional development will be conducted internally or externally and will be individualized or uniform.
3. Provide, as **Attachment 20**, a schedule and description of any specific professional development that will take place prior to school opening. Provide a detailed description of what will be addressed during this induction period and how teachers will be prepared to deliver any unique

or particularly challenging aspects of the curriculum and instructional methods. Include safety and child abuse training.

4. Describe the expected number of days/hours for professional development throughout the school year, and explain how the school's calendar, daily schedule, and staffing structure accommodate this plan. Include time scheduled for common planning or collaboration in this discussion and specify how this time will typically be used.

Section 24: Facilities

Charter school facilities must comply with applicable state and local health and safety requirements. In addition, charter school applicants must be prepared to follow applicable municipal planning review procedures.

1. Describe the basic facilities requirements for accommodating the school as proposed, including number of classrooms, square footage per classroom, common areas, overall square footage, and amenities.
2. Explain anticipated specialty classroom needs, including the number of each type and the number of students to be accommodated at one time. Specialty needs may include, but are not limited to, the following: science labs, art room, computer labs, library/media center, performance/dance room, auditorium, etc.
3. Describe anticipated administrative/support space needs, including anticipated number of each: main office, satellite office, work room/copy room, supplies/storage, teacher work rooms, etc.
4. Explain which, if any, of the following are essential to fulfillment of the core athletic program: gymnasium, locker rooms, weight rooms, field(s) (football, soccer, multipurpose), baseball/softball field, etc.
5. Identify any other significant facilities needs not already specified, for example: Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility requirements, playground, large common space, other special considerations (identify and explain).
6. Describe the steps already taken to identify prospective facilities, as well as the process for identifying and securing a facility, including any brokers or consultants the applicant is employing to navigate the real estate market, plans for renovations, timelines, financing, etc.
7. If the applicant currently holds a facility or has an MOU or other proof of intent to secure a

specific facility, briefly describe the facility, including location, size, and amenities.

- a. Provide proof of the commitment as **Attachment 21**;
- b. **Attachment 21** may also include up to 10 (ten) pages of supporting documents providing details about the facility.

Section 25: Start-Up and Ongoing Operations

1. Provide, as **Attachment 22**, on the template provided by the Commission, a detailed start-up plan for the school, specifying tasks, and timelines. This plan should align with the start-up budget.
2. Describe the school transportation plan and arrangements for prospective students. In addition to daily transportation needs, describe how the school plans to meet transportation needs for field trips and athletic events.
3. Summarize the plan for safety and security for students, the facility, and property, and how that plan complies with all federal, state, county, and city health and safety laws. Explain the types of security personnel, technology, equipment, and policies that the school will employ.
4. Describe how student records will be maintained, managed, and protected. Also, describe the software that will be used for student records.
5. Outline the plans for food service and other significant operational or ancillary services.
6. Provide, as **Attachment 23**, a list of the types of insurance coverage the school will secure, including a description of the levels of coverage. Types of insurance include, but are not limited to, workers' compensation, unemployment compensation, general liability, property, indemnity, directors and officers, motor vehicle, and errors and omissions. Applicants should ensure that they have the coverage identified in the sample contract (Exhibit B, Section 5).
7. Describe in detail who is currently working or who will work on a full-time or nearly full-time basis following approval of the charter to lead development of the school and the plan to compensate these individuals.

CATEGORY 6: FINANCIAL PLAN

Section 26: Financial Plan

1. Describe the systems, policies, and processes the school will use for financial planning, accounting, purchasing, and payroll, including a description of how it will establish and maintain strong internal controls and ensure compliance with all financial reporting requirements. Review the Maine Department of Education's list of approved software systems and describe the accounting software that will be used.
2. Describe the roles and responsibilities of the school's administration and governing board for school finances and distinguish between each.
3. Describe the school's plans and procedures for contracting for an annual independent audit of the financial operations of the school.
4. Describe how the school will ensure financial transparency to the Commission and the public, including its plans for public adoption of its budget and public dissemination of its annual audit and an annual financial report.
5. Submit a completed Financial Plan Workbook (Commission Template), as **Attachment 24**. Be sure to complete all sheets in the Workbook. In developing the budget, please use the per-pupil revenue guidance provided by the Commission.
6. As **Attachment 25**, present a detailed budget narrative, that describes how the budget aligns with and supports implementation of the educational program. The narrative should include a description of assumptions and revenue estimates that includes, but is not limited to, the basis and calculations for revenue projections, staffing levels, and expenditures. The narrative response should specifically address the degree to which the school/campus budget will rely on variable income (e.g., grants, donations, fundraising). The budget narrative should include the following:
 - a. Anticipated funding sources: Indicate the amount and sources of funds, property or other resources expected to be available through banks, lending institutions, corporations, foundations, grants, etc. Describe any restrictions on access to, or use of, any identified funding sources. Include evidence of commitment for any funds on which the school's core operation depends;

- b. Discuss the school’s contingency plan to meet financial needs if anticipated revenues are not received or are lower than estimated;
 - c. Describe in detail the year one cash flow contingency, if revenue projections are not met in advance of opening;
 - d. Provide, as **Attachment 26**, evidence of philanthropic funding commitments; and
 - e. Discuss how the charter school will be able to demonstrate a cash reserve by the end of Year 3, sufficient to cover expenses for two (2) months or more.
7. Provide, as **Attachment 27**, the school’s long-term fundraising plan. Be sure to include specifics as to how the school will sustain any necessary fundraising, who will take the lead in implementing the plan, and how board members will be engaged in fundraising and plan implementation.
8. For established organizations: Provide, as **Attachment 28**, the most recent internal financial statements, including balance sheets and income statements for the organization and any related business entities. Be sure that the school level and overall operations are distinctly represented.
9. For established organizations: For the organization as a whole and any related business entities, provide, as **Attachment 29**, the last three years of independent financial audit reports and management letters, if applicable.

CATEGORY 7: EXISTING OPERATORS

Section 27: Existing Operators

Applicants who already operate one or more schools must respond to the following:

1. Provide a detailed description of the organization's growth plans and capacity to successfully support and execute that plan, including business plans to support anticipated growth. The description must also include the organization's overall growth plan regarding the total number of charter schools it hopes to operate in Maine.
2. Using the Portfolio Summary Template provided, complete all requested information for each of the organization's schools and provide as **Attachment 30**.
3. For applicants authorized to open a school in the 2026 school year and beyond, **whether by the Commission or another authorizer**, provide a status report regarding compliance with each preopening condition.
4. Disclose any schools that have been closed or non-renewed, or charters that have been revoked by any authorizer.

CATEGORY 8: CAPACITY

Section 28: Team Capacity

1. Identify the key members of the school's leadership team. Identify only individuals who will play a substantial and ongoing role in school development, governance and/or management, and will thus share responsibility for the school's educational success. These individuals may include current or proposed governing board members, school leadership/management, and any essential partners who will play an important ongoing role in the school's development and operation.
 2. Describe the team's individual and collective qualifications for implementing the school design successfully, including capacity in areas such as:
 - a. School leadership, administration, and governance;
 - b. Curriculum, instruction, and assessment;
 - c. Performance management;
 - d. Cultural competence/inclusiveness;
 - e. Family and community engagement;
 - f. Special populations;
 - g. Staffing;
 - h. Professional development;
 - i. Performance management;
 - j. General operations;
 - k. State and Federal compliance;
 - l. Finances and Financial management;
 - m. Fundraising and development;
 - n. Accounting and internal controls; and
 - o. Facilities acquisition and management; including managing build-out and/or renovations, as applicable.
 3. Identify the principal/head of school candidate and explain why this individual is well qualified to lead the proposed school in achieving its mission. Summarize the proposed leader's academic and organizational leadership record. Discuss the evidence that demonstrates capacity to practice cultural competency and design, launch, and manage a high-performing charter school. If the proposed leader has never run a school, describe any leadership training programs or other relevant leadership roles in which they have served, completed, or participated. Provide, as **Attachment 31**, the qualifications and resume for this individual. Provide specific evidence
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(i.e., track record) of the leader’s ability to effectively serve the anticipated population.

—OR—

If no candidate has been identified, discuss the process and timeline for recruiting, selecting, and hiring the school leader. Describe the criteria to be used in selecting this leader, and provide, as **Attachment 31**, qualifications for the school leader and a plan for recruiting and hiring a strong and compatible leader.

4. Describe the responsibilities of the school’s leadership/management team beyond the principal/head of school.
5. Identify any organizations, agencies, or consultants that are partners in planning and establishing the school, along with a brief description of their current and planned roles and any resources they have contributed or plan to contribute to the school’s development.

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