

Audubon Center of the North Woods New Charter School Proposal Guide

The Audubon Center of the North Woods (ACNW) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) residential environmental learning center and green conference/retreat center located near Sandstone, MN. ACNW envisions a healthy planet where all people live in balance with the Earth. Its mission is to instill a connection and commitment to the environment in people of all communities through experiential learning. To support its mission and vision, ACNW became an approved authorizer of charter schools in Minnesota. The ACNW Charter School Division (CSD) is located in Minneapolis and carries out ACNW authorizing activities.

The authorizing mission of ACNW is to ensure quality academic and environmental literacy outcomes for students in Minnesota by conducting effective oversight and evaluation of its authorized schools, providing strategic support to schools, and making informed and merit-based decisions about its portfolio of charter schools. The authorizing vision of the ACNW is to authorize a portfolio of high performing charter schools that instill a connection and commitment to the environment in their school communities, while working towards a healthy planet where all people live in balance with the Earth.

ACNW aims to expand learning opportunities for students in Minnesota; therefore, we seek high quality new school proposals from individuals and groups who have the skill, capacity, and vision to initiate and sustain high quality, innovative public charter schools. Successful proposals will present plans to provide all students, including those with special needs and English learners, with a quality education that develops the whole child, ensure efficient use of public resources, and develop the environmental literacy of children and youth.

Timeline

The chart below represents the timeline for ACNW's new school proposal process. The Notice of Intent to Apply (NOI) must be submitted at least two years prior to opening. For example, a school wishing to open in the Fall of 2019 must submit its NOI by September 15, 2017. Failure to meet the deadlines may result in disqualification of the application. If a deadline falls on a weekend or non-business day, the deadline moves to the following business day.

Activity	Date
Notice of Intent to Apply (NOI) due to ACNW.	September 15
ACNW provides informal feedback on NOI.	15-20 days after receiving NOI
Full application due to ACNW.	January 5
Capacity Interview with proposal team.	January-February
Final decision by ACNW Board of Directors and notification to applicant.	April
ACNW submits New School Affidavit to the Minnesota Department of Education.	No later than May 1

Evaluation Process

New School Proposals must be reviewed at four levels in order to be approved:

- ACNW Charter School Division (CSD)
- ACNW Charter School Committee (CSC)
- ACNW Board of Directors
- Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)

ACNW reserves the right to reject any and all proposals for any reason.

Initial Development and Feedback

As you develop your plans and ideas for founding a new charter school, become familiar with Minnesota Statutes [Chapter 124E](#), which governs charter school formation and operation. Also review information available on the [ACNW website](#) to learn about our authorizing activities and expectations. Please reach out to the CSD to discuss initial plans and ideas for the new school, as well as ACNW's proposal process and requirements (at 612-331-4181 or admin@auduboncharterschools.org).

Notice of Intent

New school applicants must submit a Notice of Intent to Apply (NOI) to ACNW in order for a complete proposal to be considered. The NOI will outline the vision, mission, educational approach, founders, and leadership structure of the school. The NOI must be submitted via e-mail to admin@auduboncharterschools.org. Applicants must use the NOI template found on the [ACNW website](#) (and as part of this document). The deadline for submission of the NOI is defined above. The NOI is not intended to be an initial exploration of ideas, but rather a competent summary of a plan well underway.

ACNW Informal Feedback on NOI

ACNW Charter School Division staff, in consultation with the ACNW Charter School Committee, will review the NOI and provide informal feedback indicating the potential mission match and ACNW's potential interest in authorizing the school. School developers are encouraged to consider this feedback prior to submission of the full proposal.

Proposal Evaluation

Applicants must complete all required sections of the New School Proposal. Applicants are expected to review the proposal requirements closely. Review the [ACNW website](#) to ensure you have the most up to date version of the proposal template.

After receipt of the proposal, the ACNW will review the proposal for completeness and required formatting. If a proposal is found to be incomplete or incorrectly formatted, ACNW may disqualify the proposal and decide not to proceed with the new school proposal evaluation.

ACNW staff and external evaluators will evaluate the proposal using the criteria set forth in ACNW's New School Proposal Review Rubric. This evaluation will include a thorough review of the written proposal, a substantive in-person interview with all qualified applicant groups, and other due diligence to examine the applicant's experience and capacity. To be considered for approval, a proposal must meet ACNW's new school proposal requirements, which will be evidenced by Overall Section Ratings of Meets in all applicable areas of the proposal review rubric.

The CSD will produce a Summary Report, which compiles the findings from the evaluation. The report will contain a recommendation regarding approval or denial of the New School Proposal. The CSC will review the Evaluation Report and make a recommendation to the full ACNW Board, which will make the final decision on the proposal. Should the ACNW Board grant approval, it will direct the CSD to use information provided in the proposal along with additional necessary information to submit a New School Affidavit on behalf of the school to MDE for final approval.

The CSC, in consultation with the CSD, may find that a proposal substantially meets the requirements outlined in the review rubric but that additional information is required or conditions must be met prior to making a recommendation for approval to the full ACNW Board. In such cases, the applicant will be notified and provided a deadline to submit additional information. If the applicant does not provide additional information that results in the proposal obtaining Overall Section Ratings of Meets in all applicable areas of the review rubric, the CSC will not make a recommendation for approval to the ACNW Board.

New School Start-Up and Ready to Open Process

Once a charter school application is approved, ACNW will monitor the start-up group's progress as they lay the foundation for the school's success. ACNW is committed to working with the developers to ensure the creation of a successful school. To this end, ACNW will require developers to create and maintain a start-up task table specific to their school which includes at least the elements in the ACNW Charter School Start-Up Guide and Progress Checklist.

The start-up period for a new charter school is typically quite challenging. The founders may encounter unforeseen difficulties in any of the areas noted in the start-up task list. ACNW will monitor authorized schools' start-up efforts to ensure the school is ready before it opens. In order to gain ACNW's final approval for opening, a new charter school must meet certain condition for opening set forth in the ACNW Charter School Ready-to-Open Checklist.

As the school gets closer to its opening date, the founders will use the checklist in consultation with ACNW. If the start-up school's board is unable to meet one or more of the conditions, it will submit a plan detailing how the condition will be accomplished by June 1. In the event the conditions are not met by the deadline, ACNW may, at its own discretion, decide to postpone the opening of the school by one year. The developing school may also decide on its own to delay a year to have more time to open successfully.

Submission of Proposal

An email containing an electronic version of the proposal must be **received** by ACNW by the designated deadline. Applicants must send an electronic copy of the application including all attachments in either Microsoft Word or PDF versions via e-mail to admin@auduboncharterschools.org.

Proposal Format and Organization

- 8 ½" × 11" page orientation
- 0.5-1" margins on all sides
- 11-12 point font
- Page numbers and name of school in footer on each page
- Total page limit is 65 pages (not including Section XII – Early Learning Programs). Page limits do not apply to required attachments. Suggested page length of each section is specified in the guidelines below. Please limit attachments to those that are requested.

Required Attachments

- Articles of Incorporation (if the organization is incorporated)
- Proposed bylaws
- Proposed conflict of interest policy
- Proposed enrollment and lottery policy
- Founder contact list
- Founder résumés
- Proposed Organizational Chart (if not included in the application narrative)
- Job descriptions for administrative, supervisory, and instructional leadership positions
- Proposed school year calendar
- Proposed school day schedule
- Start-up budget plus a three-year operating budget (four total years)
- Cash flow projection on a monthly basis for the start-up year and the first operational year (two total years)
- The proposed management agreement or other comprehensive service agreement (if applicable)

- Evidence of parent and community interest in the school. This could include but is not limited to letters/emails of support from parents and community organizations, survey information that includes a sample survey and results, and sign-in sheets from community information sessions.



Audubon Center of the North Woods Notice of Intent to Submit New School Proposal

An applicant must submit a Notice of Intent to Apply (NOI) to ACNW in order for a complete proposal to be considered. The NOI will outline the vision, mission, educational approach, founders, and leadership structure of the school. The NOI must be submitted via e-mail to admin@auduboncharterschools.org. Applicants must use the NOI template below. The NOI can be no more than six (6) pages in length (including the cover sheet). The NOI is not intended to be an initial exploration of ideas, but rather a competent summary of a plan well underway.

Name of proposed school:	
Primary contact person:	
Email:	
Phone:	
Mailing address:	

Names, roles, and current employment of all members of the Founding Team (add lines as needed):

Full Name	Current Job Title and Employer	Position with Proposed School

Grade levels to be served by the proposed school:	
Proposed geographic location of the school:	
Does the school expect to contract with a charter management organization or educational management organization for school management or operation? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If yes, identify the charter management organization:

Items to address in the Notice of Intent:

1. Provide an overview of the proposed school. Be sure to include:
 - a. the proposed mission, vision, and goals of the school;
 - b. the ages/grades of students to be served;
 - c. proposed location of the school;
 - d. the estimated number of students to be served at capacity;
 - e. the educational philosophy and instructional approach of the school;
 - f. how the school will meet the primary statutory purpose of charter schools; and
 - g. which additional statutory purposes the school will meet and how.
2. Describe how the school will integrate environmental education and sustainability values and strategies into the educational program and operations of the school.
3. Identify the persons who will likely be the founding board of the school. Include a brief summary of the résumé of each person. At least one person on the founding board must hold a current teaching license in Minnesota – list the file folder number(s) of the licensed teacher(s).

In addition, identify the persons who will be preparing the full proposal and describe how costs associated with developing the full new school proposal (if any) will be financed.

4. Briefly describe both the governance and leadership model to be used at the school.
5. (Optional) Provide any other information you deem useful for this Notice of Intent. Do not exceed the six (6) page limit.

Submit to admin@auduboncharterschools.org by the deadline of September 15. If the deadline falls on a weekend or non-business day, the deadline moves to the following business day. An NOI received after the deadline may result in disqualification.

Founder Signature

Founder Signature

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**Audubon Center of the North Woods
New School Proposal
Cover Page**

Name of proposed school:	
Primary contact person:	
Email:	
Phone:	
Mailing address:	

Names, roles, and current employment of all members of the Founding Team (add lines as needed):

Full Name	Current Job Title and Employer	Position with Proposed School

Grade levels to be served by the proposed school:	
Proposed geographic location of the school:	
Does the school expect to contract with a charter management organization or educational management organization for school management or operation? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If yes, identify the charter management organization:

Proposed School Director, Principal, or Lead Administrator information (if already selected):

Name of proposed candidate:	
Current employment:	
Email:	
Phone:	

Submit to admin@auduboncharterschools.org by the deadline of January 6, 2018. A proposal received after the deadline will not be reviewed.

By approval and submission of this application, the founders of agree to the terms of the base charter contract (no exhibits) without modification. The base charter contract is available on the [ACNW website](#).

Founder Signature

Founder Signature

Founder Signature

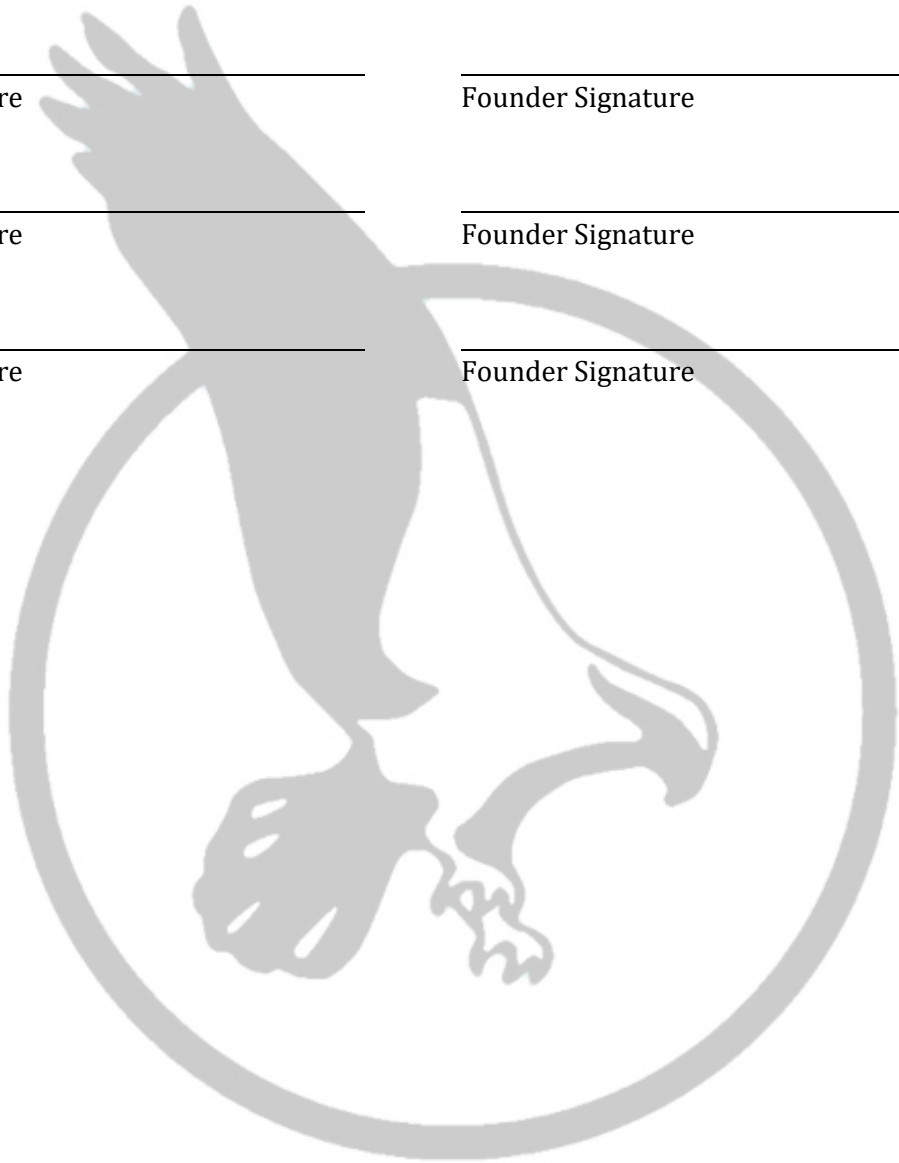
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Audubon Center of the North Woods New School Proposal

Directly address each section below. Responses should be concise and comprehensive.

Section I. Executive Summary (2-3 pages)

1. Provide a brief explanation of why you are seeking to open a public charter school and identify what problem you are addressing by starting a school .
2. State the grade levels and number of students to be served by the proposed school.
3. State the proposed location of the school.
4. Briefly describe the educational philosophy, instructional methodology, and key programmatic features the school will implement in order to accomplish its vision and mission.
5. Briefly describe how the school will improve student achievement in the intended community.
6. Summarize the relevant experience of the school's founders.
7. Describe how the school plans to integrate environmental education and sustainability into the program.
8. Explain why the school is seeking to be authorized by the Audubon Center of the North Woods.
9. Indicate whether you have submitted or will submit a substantially similar proposal to another authorizer for this school. If so, provide the name of the authorizer, the date (or intended date) of submission, and the status of the proposal.

Section II. Vision and Mission (2-3 pages)

1. State the vision of the proposed school. This should be a clear, concise, and compelling vision statement that articulates the long-term change you hope to see as a result of the school's success.
2. State the mission of the proposed school. This should be a clear, concise, and compelling mission statement that articulates the school's purpose or desired results and how it plans to achieve the desired results.
3. Describe how the school will evaluate whether its mission is being accomplished and its vision realized.
4. Describe how the school intends to utilize environmental education values and strategies to fulfill its vision and mission. Explain how your mission and vision aligns with the mission and vision of ACNW.

Section III. Need and Demand (2-4 pages)

1. Provide a description and evidence of the need and demand for a school of this grade configuration in the location identified. Need refers to the reason(s) existing schools are insufficient or inadequate. Demand refers to the desire from prospective families to attend the proposed school.

2. Based on the identified need and demand, describe the new and unique characteristics this school would provide to students that distinguish it relative to other education options available to students in the area.
3. Complete and include the table provided below in your response to this section. Identify the number of students expected to attend the school each year by grade level (add additional columns to the table if it will take more than five years to reach full enrollment).

Grades	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
PreK					
K					
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
Total					

4. Describe the community support for an additional school in this area. Include evidence of community support for, and interest in, the proposed charter school sufficient to allow the school to reach its anticipated enrollment. Detail the strategies that have been used to engage the community in the development of this school. Include key community partners and information on parental interest in the school.
5. You are encouraged to include as an attachment evidence of parent and community interest in the school. This could include but is not limited to letters/emails of support from parents and community organizations, survey information that includes a sample survey and results, and sign-in sheets from community information sessions.

Section IV. Purpose (2-3 pages)

1. As articulated in MN Stat. 124E.01, Subd. 1, the primary purpose of a charter school is to improve all pupil learning and all student achievement. Describe how the school intends to meet the primary purpose of a charter school as defined in statute, how this aligns to the school’s mission and vision, and how the school will report on its progress towards meeting this purpose.
2. As articulated in MN Stat. 124E.01, Subd. 1, additional purposes of a charter school include to:
 - (1) increase learning opportunities for all pupils;
 - (2) encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
 - (3) measure learning outcomes and create different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes;
 - (4) establish new forms of accountability for schools; and

(5) create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.

Identify the additional purpose(s) that the charter school intends to meet. Describe how the school intends to meet the identified purpose(s), how the identified purpose(s) align(s) to the school's mission and vision, and how the school will report on its progress towards meeting the identified purpose(s).

Section V. Goals, Student Performance Expectations, and Evaluation Plan (6-10 pages)

1. Provide student achievement goals in SMART format for improving all pupil learning and all student achievement in areas including mathematics, reading, and science. In addition, provide goals that measure student growth, knowledge, skill development and accomplishments in other areas related to the school's mission and growth of the whole child.
2. Provide student performance goals in SMART format for achieving other accountability measures such as attendance, graduation, and other appropriate aspects of the school's proposed program.
3. Provide rationale for the goals and the expected level of performance, including projected baseline data and how these goals are designed to promote high expectations for all students, including students with special needs and English learners.
4. Describe the school's plans to use assessment data to monitor progress towards meeting academic performance goals and affect teaching and learning to improve student achievement. Include the school's plan to collect and use baseline data (in the fall of the opening year) to evaluate the school's goals and educational program.
5. Describe how the school will assess students' progress in demonstrating the awareness, knowledge, skills, and attitudes to work individually and collectively toward sustaining a healthy natural environment.

Section VI. Educational Program (6-10 pages)

1. Describe the guiding educational philosophy of the proposed school.
2. Describe the key aspects of the school culture that will be developed to promote student academic achievement and development of the whole child.
3. Describe the educational program, including instructional methodology, curricula, instructional techniques, grade levels, and number of students to be served. Include research that provides evidence that the program will achieve the desired outcomes for the proposed student body. In addition, provide information on innovative aspects of the program that may not have a research base. Include information about the major subject areas of reading, math, science, and social studies. Identify how the education program is designed to engage students in ways that are culturally and linguistically appropriate, responsive, and relevant. In addition, describe how students will receive a comprehensive education that includes but is not limited to the arts, physical education, 21st century skills, and social/emotional/physical wellness. Include information about alignment to Minnesota Academic Standards.
4. Describe how the school will offer both remediation and acceleration where appropriate based on student need.

5. *Special Education*: Describe how the school will provide access to students with disabilities to a free appropriate education in the least restrictive environment in compliance with all laws.
 - a. Describe the school's Child Find Process.
 - b. Describe the methods and strategies for serving students with disabilities, including: kinds and types of services provided directly by the school, distinguished from services provided by third-party contracts; the personnel the school will devote to special education and their associated administrative responsibilities; how the school will assess/review/revise and implement IEPs; and how the school will provide accommodations for students.
 - c. Describe the professional development plan for special education and general education teachers and support staff, as well as other staff (as applicable).
6. Students with *Limited English Proficiency*. Provide a description of the program design, methods, and strategies for serving students who are English Learners (ELs). Include identification processes, monitoring, instructional strategies, assessment, professional development of staff, exit criteria, and staffing.
7. Describe the instructional leadership structure at the school.
8. Describe the school's plan for teacher professional development and evaluation, including how the quality of instruction will be monitored and improved.
9. Describe how the school adapts environmental education to the needs and unique aspects of the school's educational program or the needs of the school community, including how environmental education is integrated into the core curricula or used as an integrating theme across the curriculum. Describe how the school creates a positive social and academic environment to support students in the process of learning, asking questions and thinking critically about environmental issues and solutions. Describe how the school will engage students in nature-focused outdoor experiences that enhance in-classroom learning. In addition, describe the plan for providing professional development to staff in support of this approach.
10. Describe skills and experiences needed by educational staff to efficiently and effectively carry out the educational program model. Include the plan for recruiting, training, and retaining high quality staff.
11. Provide a proposed school year calendar and school day schedule (as attachments). Describe how the calendar and schedule are designed to support the educational program and achievement of academic and environmental education goals.
12. State whether the school intends to offer any single-sex programming (classrooms, advisories, etc.). If so, describe how the school will ensure compliance with [Title IX](#) requirements.
13. If the school plans to provide any out-of-school time programs such as before/after school or summer school, describe those programs.

Section VII. Governance, Management, and Administration (6-10 pages)

1. Describe the management and leadership structure at the school, including plans to enter into a management or other comprehensive service agreement/contract (if applicable). Include a rationale for the management and leadership structure.
 - a. Provide an Organizational Chart (either in the application narrative or as an attachment).
 - b. If applicable, provide a draft of the school's management agreement or other comprehensive service agreement (as an attachment).

2. Describe the level of authority the governing board will convey to the school's administrator/leader or administrative/leadership team. Include a description of the relationships and separation of duties between the Board of Directors and the School Leadership.
3. Consistent with MN Statute 124E. Subd. 2., describe the qualifications for all persons that hold administrative, supervisory, or instructional leadership roles at the school. (Provide job descriptions for these positions as an attachment.)
4. Consistent with MN Statute 124E. Subd. 2., describe the evaluation process to be implemented by the board of directors for all persons that hold administrative, supervisory, or instructional leadership roles at the school.
5. Describe the process for hiring individuals in leadership positions at the school. Include how that will be an open and fair process that reaches out to candidates who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, and disability.
6. Describe the plan to recruit well-qualified board members who are representative of the students and families being served by the school.
7. Describe the plan for initial and ongoing training of board members. Include plans for onboarding of new board members.
8. Explain how the board will comply with Open Meetings and Open Records laws.
9. Explain how the founding and ongoing governing board will create and adopt board policies.

Section VIII. Financial Management (2-4 pages)

1. Describe the process the school will use to do the following, highlighting the role of the board and school administration:
 - a. Develop and approve the annual budget;
 - b. Monitor the school's expenditures and revenues in relation to the budget;
 - c. Develop and implement appropriate financial policies and practices, including but not limited to purchasing, accounting, and payroll;
 - d. Ensure timely and accurate financial reporting;
 - e. Select the financial auditor;
 - f. Monitor the near term and long term financial health of the organization;
 - g. Manage the school's finances day-to-day;
 - h. Maintain strong internal controls; and
 - i. Ensure sufficient resources for environmental education.
2. Provide (as an attachment) a start-up budget plus a three-year operating budget (four total years) for the charter school. Use the budget worksheet provided. Include:
 - a. A narrative that includes detailed assumptions for all revenue and expenditures for each year;
 - b. A specific narrative description of line items related to the school's implementation of environmental education programs and activities;
 - c. Sources of start-up revenue; and
 - d. Separations of funds (Fund 1, Fund 2, and Fund 4).

3. Provide (as an attachment) a cash flow projection on a monthly basis for the start-up year and the first operational year (two total years). Include:
 - a. A narrative that includes detailed assumptions; and
 - b. A Year 1 cash flow contingency plan.

Section IX. Operations (3-7 pages)

Facilities

1. Describe the requirements for the school's facility, including learning spaces and other characteristics that are designed to meet the unique needs of the school and students to be served by the school.
2. Describe the school's plan, including the timeline, process, and milestones to be met, to secure a suitable facility as described above. Indicate any potential facilities that have been identified, and a proposed lease or ownership arrangement of the facility, including any potential conflicts of interest.
3. Describe how the school facility will support implementation of environmental education curriculum and environmentally sustainable practices. Include a plan for the schoolyard and outdoor areas.

Transportation

4. Describe the school's planned transportation arrangements. Include how the approach will support environmental sustainability.

Food Service

5. Describe the school's planned food service program. Include how the program will support environmental sustainability.

Environmental Sustainability

6. Describe how the school's purchasing choices and operational decision-making will reflect a commitment to environmental sustainability and how the school will implement waste reduction and recycling programs.

Health Services

7. Describe the school's plan to provide required health services.

Student Discipline

8. Describe the school's discipline process.

Community and Parent Involvement

9. Describe how parents and other members of the community will be involved in the planning, program design, and implementation of the charter school.

Section X. Marketing and Outreach (3-5 pages)

1. Describe how students in the community will be informed about this charter school and will be given an equal opportunity to attend this charter school.
2. Describe how the school will conduct an open admissions process including the use of a lottery to provide equal access to all students who apply. Provide a proposed enrollment and lottery policy as an attachment.

3. Describe how the school will intentionally and specifically conduct outreach to educationally and economically disadvantaged and hard-to-reach populations, including students with special needs and English Learners.

Section XI. School Founders (3-5 pages)

1. For each member of the applicant team identified on the Proposal Cover Page describe: his/her experience/involvement with K-12 education, environmental education, and the design and operation of a charter school; other relevant experience in areas of management, finance, human resources, legal compliance, etc.; expected role and responsibilities during the pre-operational planning period; whether he/she intends to become a member of the board; whether he/she intends to apply for employment at the new school; and affiliations/relationships with other founders and current/potential consultants and vendor organizations.
2. List the proposed members of the initial board of directors for the charter school, indicating any ex-officio members and if any seat is proposed to be nonvoting. Also indicate any vacant positions expected to be filled. Describe the process for appointing or electing the initial board of directors.
3. Describe the school's plan to carry out start-up activities at the school, leading up to opening. Include a discussion of the potential start-up challenges, how you plan to address these challenges, and how the vision, mission, and ideas of the founders will be translated to the operational leader(s) once the school opens.
4. Provide a contact list for all members of the founding team (as an attachment).
5. Provide résumés of all members of the founding team (as an attachment).
6. Identify the date of the most recent background check obtained for school founders and whether adverse information was identified.

Section XII. Early Learning Program (if applicable)

Check the box(es) that relate to the proposed early learning program:

- Early childhood health and developmental screening
- Preschool instructional program (not prekindergarten) for children ages 3-5 years
Anticipated size of preschool instructional program: _____
- Prekindergarten instructional program for four-year-olds to prepare children for entry into kindergarten the following year
Anticipated size of prekindergarten instructional program: _____

Part A. Early Learning Program Description, Need, and Demand

1. If not addressed above, provide the following information regarding the school's proposed early learning program(s):
 - a. A brief description of the program(s).
 - b. Whether the program(s) will be free to all participants or fee-based.
 - i. If fee-based, include the fee structure that will be used.
 - ii. Indicate if the school will provide enrollment preference to kindergarten for students participating in the school's early learning program per Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.11(c).

- c. Describe the school's plans to fund the early learning program(s).
- d. Describe how the proposed early learning program(s) will include environmental education programming consistent with ACNW expectations.
- e. Provide evidence to document need and demand for the program(s), including the following:
 - i. Evidence of interest from current or prospective families and community level support for the early learning program(s) as attachments. This could include but is not limited to letters/emails of support from parents and community organizations, survey information that includes a sample survey and survey results, and sign-in sheets from community information sessions.
 - ii. Discussion of how the program(s) fulfills an unmet need in the community.

Part B. Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening

- 1. Describe the school's plan and capacity to provide an Early Childhood Screening program in accordance with Minnesota Statutes 121A.16–121A.19 and Minnesota Rules 3530.3000, 3530.3300, and 3530.3400.

Part C. Prekindergarten and/or Preschool Instructional Program

- 1. Provide a plan that addresses the following elements:
 - a. **Comprehensive Child Assessment:** Assess each child's cognitive skills with a comprehensive child assessment instrument when the child enters and again before the child leaves the program to inform program planning and promote kindergarten readiness.
 - i. Describe the assessment process used to measure individual child progress in all the prekindergarten and preschool instructional classes that includes the use of a standardized child assessment instrument, such as *High Scope Child Observation Record (COR)*, *Teaching Strategies Gold* or *Work Sampling System*.
 - ii. To measure child progress, the assessment must be used at program entrance and program exit.
 - iii. At a minimum, the comprehensive assessment should measure children's progress in the domains of language and literacy and mathematical thinking. Other domains may include approaches to learning, general cognitive development, physical and motor development, social and emotional development, creativity and the arts.
 - b. **Intentional Instructional Practice:** Provide intentional instructional practice aligned with the state early childhood learning standards and kindergarten standards that is based on early childhood research and professional practice focused on children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills and development and prepares children for the transition to kindergarten, including early literacy skills.
 - i. Describe how program content and intentional instructional practices are aligned with the *Early Childhood Indicators of Progress: Minnesota's Early Learning Standards (ECIPs)* available on the [MDE website](#).
 - ii. Include a very brief description of the curriculum used in the early learning program, such as *High Scope Preschool Curriculum* or *Opening the World of Learning (OWL)*.
 - iii. Indicate how the *Early Childhood Indicators of Progress: Minnesota's Early Learning Standards (ECIPs)* are incorporated into the program.
 - iv. Provide an overview of instructional practice to support children's early literacy skills development.

- c. **Kindergarten Transition:** Coordinate appropriate kindergarten transition with parents and kindergarten teachers.
 - i. Briefly describe the program plan for transition to kindergarten that includes meaningful coordination and planning with kindergarten teachers, and engages families in a variety of ways to support children’s learning and successful transition to kindergarten.
 - ii. Describe a plan for providing guidance to families not enrolling their child in the charter school kindergarten program.

- d. **Coordinate with Relevant Community-Based Services**
 - i. Coordination may include referrals to community programs based on child needs, such as local public health, social services, mental health services, or other early learning or child care programs.
 - ii. Provide a brief description of how the program coordinates with community organizations and how those resources are shared with families.

- e. **Staff Ratios and Licensure:** Ensure staff-child ratios of one-to-ten and maximum group size of 20 children with the staff being supervised by a licensed early childhood teacher.
 - i. Briefly describe how the prekindergarten or preschool instructional program is provided and how ratios and group size are provided to ensure a high-quality early learning program.
 - ii. For each prekindergarten and preschool instructional class, describe staff licensure area and MN teaching license file folder number and other credentials, as appropriate.

- f. **Teacher Content Knowledge:** Have teachers knowledgeable in early childhood curriculum content, assessment, and instruction.
 - i. Describe licensed staff training/professional development specific to early learning curriculum, instructional practices and assessment that has been completed in the past five years.

- g. **Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening:** Ensure participating children have completed health and developmental screening within 90 days of program enrollment under Minnesota Statutes, sections 121A.16 to 121A.19.
 - i. Provide a description of how and where participating children receive health and developmental screening either through a traditional school district or comparable screening from health care provider (such as a Child and Teen Checkups) if the charter school is not providing the early childhood health and developmental screening program. It is not necessary for the charter school to provide the early childhood health and developmental screening, but must describe how children receive the comprehensive health and developmental screening to identify possible problems that may interfere with children’s learning.
 - ii. Provide a plan for those children who do not successfully complete early childhood screening.

**Audubon Center of the North Woods
New School Proposal
Review Rubric**

School Name:	Reviewer Name:		
Strengths:			
Weaknesses:			
Questions:			
Overall Recommendation	Denial	Additional Information Required	Approval
Narrative Justification of Recommendation:			

	Overall Section Ratings		
	Inadequate	Approaches	Meets
I. Executive Summary			
II. Vision and Mission			
III. Need			
IV. Purpose			
V. Goals, Student Performance Expectations, and Evaluation Plan			
VI. Educational Program			
VII. Governance, Management, and Administration			
VIII. Financial Management			
IX. Operations			
X. Marketing and Outreach			
XI. School Founders			
XII. Early Learning Program			

Performance Rating Key:

- **Inadequate:** Lacks significant detail, demonstrates lack of preparation, or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the applicant’s understanding of the issues, concepts, and/or ability to open and maintain a quality charter school.
- **Approaches:** Addresses some of the criteria, or lacks meaningful detail and requires important additional information in order to be reasonably comprehensive.
- **Meets:** Address most of the criteria, is reasonably comprehensive, and indicates the applicant’s understanding of the issues, concepts, and/or ability to open and maintain a quality charter school.

I. Executive Summary

Strengths			
Weaknesses			
Questions			
	Inadequate	Approaches	Meets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clear, concise overview explains the key elements of the proposed charter school including: origins; grade levels and number of students to be served; proposed location; educational philosophy, instructional methodology and key programmatic features; how the school will improve student achievement; experience of founders; and plans to integrate environmental education and sustainability. 			
OVERALL SECTION RATING			

- **Inadequate:** Lacks significant detail, demonstrates lack of preparation, or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the applicant's understanding of the issues, concepts, and/or ability to open and maintain a quality charter school.
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II. Vision and Mission

Strengths			
Weaknesses			
Questions			
	Inadequate	Approaches	Meets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear, concise and compelling vision and mission statements articulate the desired long-term changes, the school's purpose or desired results, and how it plans to achieve the desired results. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear description of how the school will know if its mission is being accomplished and its vision realized is presented. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compelling plans to utilize environmental education values and strategies to fulfill its mission, vision, and values are described. 			
OVERALL SECTION RATING			

- **Inadequate:** Lacks significant detail, demonstrates lack of preparation, or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the applicant's understanding of the issues, concepts, and/or ability to open and maintain a quality charter school.
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III. Need and Demand

Strengths			
Weaknesses			
Questions			
	Inadequate	Approaches	Meets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compelling evidence documents the need and demand for a school of these characteristics and proposed grade configuration in the location identified. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrollment projections are supported by evidence of actual or potential demand, and marketing and recruitment plans seem likely to generate enrollment sufficient to meet projections. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of community support is presented that is likely to further the school’s mission and program. 			
OVERALL SECTION RATING			

- **Inadequate:** Lacks significant detail, demonstrates lack of preparation, or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the applicant’s understanding of the issues, concepts, and/or ability to open and maintain a quality charter school.
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IV. Purpose

Strengths			
Weaknesses			
Questions			
	Inadequate	Approaches	Meets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents a clear description of how the school intends to meet and report on progress towards meeting the primary purpose of a charter school as defined in statute. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents a clear description of how the school intends to meet and report on progress towards meeting the additional purpose(s) of a charter school as defined in statute. 			
OVERALL SECTION RATING			

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V. Goals, Student Performance Expectations, and Evaluation Plan

Strengths			
Weaknesses			
Questions			
	Inadequate	Approaches	Meets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic goals are focused on improved student achievement and development of the whole child and are presented in SMART format. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic goals are comprehensive and include but are not limited to addressing student proficiency and growth using state assessments. Goals incorporate additional measures of student performance and development, including but not limited to school developed measures or rubrics, nationally normed assessments, or non-cognitive assessment tools. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The evaluation plan indicates a clear and coherent approach to measuring and reporting the educational performance and progress of individual students, cohorts, and the charter school as a whole including valid, reliable, and multiple measures of student outcomes. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strong plan for intentional use of achievement data to guide instruction and impact student achievement is evident. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal describes how the school will assess students' progress in demonstrating the awareness, knowledge, skills, and attitudes to work individually and collectively toward sustaining a healthy natural environment. 			
OVERALL SECTION RATING			

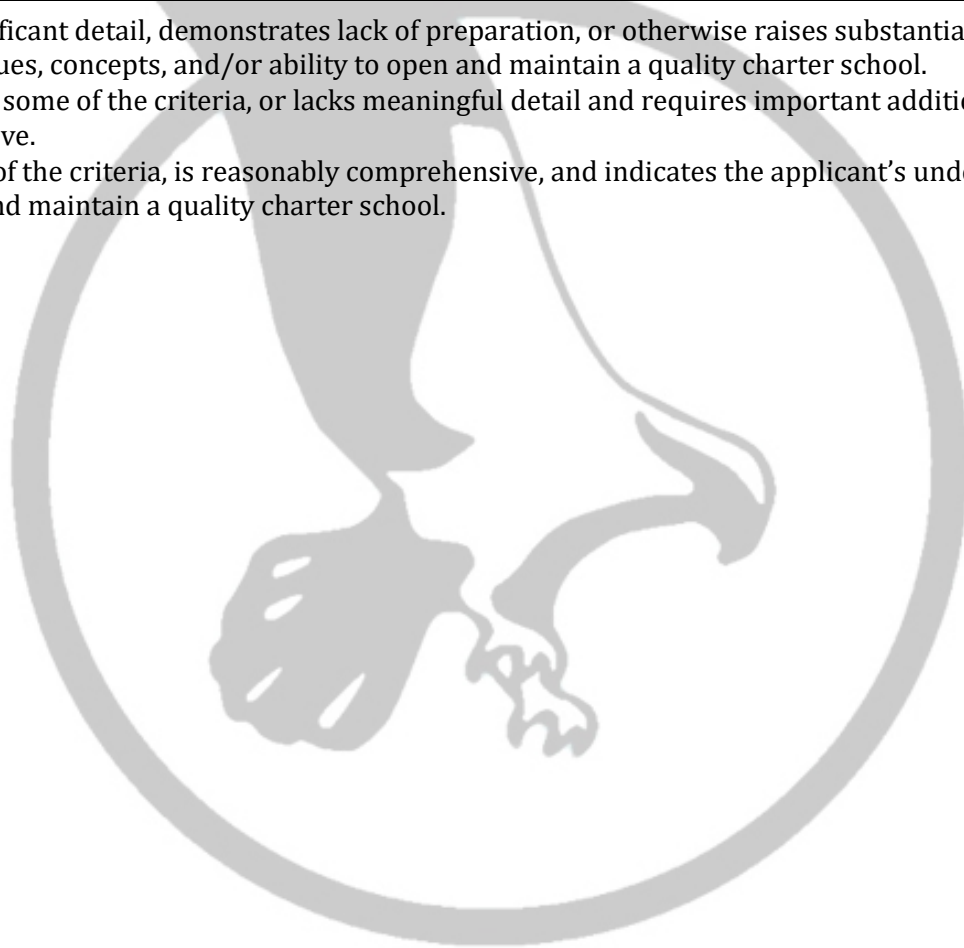
- **Inadequate:** Lacks significant detail, demonstrates lack of preparation, or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the applicant's understanding of the issues, concepts, and/or ability to open and maintain a quality charter school.
- **Approaches:** Addresses some of the criteria, or lacks meaningful detail and requires important additional information in order to be reasonably comprehensive.
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VI. Educational Program

Strengths			
Weaknesses			
Questions			
	Inadequate	Approaches	Meets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school’s philosophical approach is aligned to the school mission and is focused on improving student outcomes. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school culture that will be developed is likely to promote student achievement and development of the whole child. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The educational program, including instructional methodology, teaching techniques, and curriculum, is described fully and clearly, is research based, is aligned to state standards, provides for a comprehensive education, and presents a clear plan to improve student academic achievement. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The educational program is designed to engage students in ways that are culturally and linguistically appropriate, responsive, and relevant. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clear plan for offering both remediation and acceleration is provided and based on student need. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional leadership roles and responsibilities are clearly identified. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The professional development and teacher evaluation plans are data driven and demonstrate that the quality of instruction will be monitored and improved. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental education (EE) will be integrated into the core curricula: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EE strategies are used to teach about, with, and in the environment; Students are engaged in nature-focused outdoor experiences that enhance in-classroom learning; and Professional development is provided to staff to support EE implementation. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school has a plan for recruiting, training, and retaining high quality staff to meet the unique needs of the school’s educational program. 			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A plan to provide access to students with disabilities to a free appropriate education in the least restrictive environment in compliance with all laws is evident and likely to successfully support increased student learning. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has a plan to serve students who are English Learners (ELs) in accordance with all laws which is likely to successfully support increased student learning. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed school year calendar and school day schedule are designed to support the educational program and achievement of the academic and environmental education goals. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out-of-school or extracurricular programs are described clearly and completely. 			
OVERALL SECTION RATING			

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VII. Governance, Management, and Administration

Strengths			
Weaknesses			
Questions			
	Inadequate	Approaches	Meets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school’s board will ensure effective, accountable, and representative governance over the school’s operations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Demonstrates a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a charter school board, including oversight of a management organization or comprehensive service provider (if applicable); ○ The governing board provides strong financial and policy oversight; and ○ Well-qualified individuals who are representative of the students and families being served will be recruited to serve on the school’s board. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school’s board will ensure effective and transparent management of the school’s operations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Management plans are sufficient to deliver the proposed educational program. ○ Organizational, management, and financial plans demonstrate operational effectiveness and fiscal viability. ○ Demonstrates intent to use a fair and open process to select a well-qualified school leadership team including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recruitment and hiring timeline(s); and ▪ Plans to recruit candidates who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. ○ Qualifications, job descriptions and evaluation processes for persons who hold administrative, supervisory, or instructional leadership roles are fully described. • If applicable, discusses the school’s plan to contract with a management organization or other comprehensive service provider; provides specific evidence demonstrating the provider’s successful track record in academic, operational, and financial performance. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational chart clearly distinguishes between governance (board) and management (school leadership) and provides key roles and responsibilities of each. 			

OVERALL SECTION RATING			

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VIII. Financial Management

Strengths			
Weaknesses			
Questions			
	Inadequate	Approaches	Meets
• The financial management plan is described completely, demonstrates a strong understanding of charter school finance, and is likely to be successful.			
• The comprehensive start-up plus three-year operating budget is reasonable.			
• The monthly cash flow projection for the start-up year and first operational year is reasonable.			
OVERALL SECTION RATING			

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IX. Operations

Strengths			
Weaknesses			
Questions			
	Inadequate	Approaches	Meets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The facilities plan is described completely and likely to lead to the school securing a suitable facility that meets the unique needs of the school and complies with health and safety and building code requirements. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed facility will effectively support implementation of environmental education curriculum and environmentally sustainable practices. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential conflicts of interest related to facilities are identified. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school's planned food service program is reasonable and will effectively promote healthy eating and decision-making and sustainable practices. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school's planned transportation arrangements are reasonable. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school's plan for purchasing and operational decision-making reflects a commitment to environmental sustainability, including the implementation of school wide waste reduction and recycling programs. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The health services plan is reasonable. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The discipline process creates a safe and healthy environment for students and staff, is equitable for all student groups, and is consistent with Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A vision and strategy for meaningful parent and community support and engagement is presented that is reasonably likely to further the school's mission and program. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent and community engagement begins in the design stage and continues in substantive ways throughout the planning and implementation phases of the school. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A compelling plan is presented that provides opportunities for students to pass forward to their families and community the ideas and skills they have learned at school related to the environment, environmental stewardship, and environmental literacy. 			
OVERALL SECTION RATING			

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X. Marketing and Outreach

Strengths			
Weaknesses			
Questions			
	Inadequate	Approaches	Meets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach and recruitment plan demonstrates understanding of the community to be served and is likely to be effective, including reaching families traditionally less informed about educational options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Plan addresses how students in the community will be informed about this charter school and given an equal opportunity to attend this charter school; and ○ Plan addresses how this school will intentionally and specifically conduct outreach to hard-to-reach populations. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An open admissions process is described and enrollment and lottery policy is provided which are consistent with statutory requirements and indicate that the school will not limit admission beyond grade level and class size capacity and will only exempt prospective students from the lottery that are provided preference in federal guidance and state law. 			
OVERALL SECTION RATING			

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XI. School Founders

Strengths			
Weaknesses			
Questions			
	Inadequate	Approaches	Meets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary school founders are well-positioned to develop, plan, and implement a new high-performing charter school. The founding group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Has capacity to oversee the successful development and implementation of the educational program presented in the application; ○ Has capacity to oversee the effective and responsible management of public funds; ○ Has capacity to oversee and be responsible for the school’s compliance with its legal obligations; and ○ Has experience and expertise that includes K-12 education, environmental education, legal compliance, real estate and facilities, school financial management, human resources, fundraising and development, community engagement, and parent involvement. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start-up plans are likely to lead to a successful school opening. The vision, mission, and ideas of the founders will be effectively translated to the operational leader(s) once the school opens. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background checks on school founders have been conducted recently and are free of offenses that may negatively impact the development of a successful school. 			
OVERALL SECTION RATING			

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XII. Early Learning Program (if applicable)

A. Early Learning Program Description, Need, and Demand

Strengths			
Weaknesses			
Questions			
	Inadequate	Approaches	Meets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application provides a summary of the school’s early learning program(s), including the fee structure of the program(s) (if fee-based), and indication whether the school will grant enrollment preference to kindergarten for students participating in the school’s free early learning program(s) (if applicable). 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application describes how the early learning program(s) will be funded. The funding mechanism(s) are reasonable and allowable. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application includes information on how the proposed program(s) will include environmental education programming consistent with ACNW expectations. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application provides compelling evidence of the need and demand for the proposed program(s). 			
OVERALL SECTION RATING			

- **Inadequate:** Lacks significant detail; demonstrates lack of preparation, or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the applicant’s understanding of the issues, concepts, and/or ability to implement the proposed early learning program(s).
- **Approaches:** Addresses some of the criteria, or lacks meaningful detail and requires important additional information in order to be reasonably comprehensive.
- **Meets:** Addresses most of the criteria, is reasonably comprehensive, and indicates the applicant’s understanding of the issues, concepts, and/or ability to implement the proposed early learning program(s).

B. Early Childhood Health and Development Screening

Strengths			
Weaknesses			
Questions			
	Inadequate	Approaches	Meets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application includes a description of the school’s plan and capacity to provide an Early Childhood Screening program in accordance with applicable law. 			
OVERALL SECTION RATING			

- **Inadequate:** Lacks significant detail; demonstrates lack of preparation, or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the applicant’s understanding of the issues, concepts, and/or ability to implement the proposed early learning program(s).
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C. Prekindergarten and/or Preschool Instructional Program

Strengths			
Weaknesses			
Questions			
	Inadequate	Approaches	Meets
The proposed plan adequately addresses the following elements:			
• Comprehensive Child Assessment			
• Intentional Instructional Practice			
• Kindergarten Transition			
• Coordinate with Relevant Community-Based Services			
• Staff Ratios and Licensure			
• Teacher Content Knowledge			
• Early Childhood Screening			
OVERALL SECTION RATING			

- **Inadequate:** Lacks significant detail; demonstrates lack of preparation, or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the applicant’s understanding of the issues, concepts, and/or ability to implement the proposed early learning program(s).
- **Approaches:** Addresses some of the criteria, or lacks meaningful detail and requires important additional information in order to be reasonably comprehensive.
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