

Audubon Center of the North Woods

Grade Level and/or Site Expansion Application Guide

Introduction

The Audubon Center of the North Woods (ACNW) encourages charter schools in its portfolio that have demonstrated success in providing all students with a high quality education, advancing students' environmental literacy, ensuring efficient use of public resources, and meeting compliance requirements to expand their impact on students in Minnesota by implementing grade level and/or site expansions, should such expansion meet community need and demand and align to the strategic plan of the school.

Timeline

MN Statute 124E.06, Subd. 5 states that an authorizer must file a supplemental affidavit to the Minnesota Department of Education by October 1 in order for a school to be eligible to expand the following school year. ACNW has established the following deadlines based on the timeline outlined in statute:

- May 1 – Notice of Intent due to ACNW
- August 1 – Full Application due to ACNW

If any deadline date falls on a weekend or non-business day, the deadline moves to the following business day. Failure to meet the deadlines may result in disqualification of the application.

Evaluation Process

Expansions must be reviewed at four levels in order to be implemented:

- 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 applications for grade level and/or site expansions should ACNW determine that the school's performance does not warrant such expansion or that the expansion plans do not demonstrate a high probability of success.

Notice of Intent

A school must submit a Notice of Intent to Submit Application for Grade Level and/or Site Expansion (NOI) to ACNW in order for a complete application to be considered. The NOI must indicate the school's proposed expansion (i.e., grade level, site, or both) and include evidence in the form of meeting minutes that the school's board of directors has engaged in substantive discussion and consideration of the proposed expansion. Furthermore, the school must provide evidence of formal action by the board to submit the NOI. 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 in the timeline.

NOI Feedback and Invitation to Submit a Full Application

ACNW Charter School Division staff, in consultation with the ACNW Charter School Committee, will review the NOI and determine whether to invite the school to submit the full application. This determination will be based on the school's recent contractual performance as evidenced in formal performance evaluation documents completed by ACNW and by any other information available to ACNW. An invitation (or lack thereof) to submit a full application will be communicated to the school no later than June 1. This will include specific requirements for the full application. (See ACNW Expansion NOI Review Rubric for ACNW's criteria to determine whether to invite a school to submit a full application.)

Application Evaluation

Applicants must complete required sections of the expansion application. Applicants are expected to review these application requirements closely. Review the [ACNW website](#) to ensure you have the most up to date version of the application.

The school must demonstrate to the satisfaction of ACNW the following, which is outlined in MN Statute 124E.06, Subd. 5:

- (1) the need for the expansion with supporting long-range enrollment projections;*
- (2) a longitudinal record of demonstrated student academic performance and growth on statewide assessments under chapter 120B or on other academic assessments that measure longitudinal student performance and growth approved by the charter school's board of directors and agreed upon with the authorizer;*
- (3) a history of sound school finances and a finance plan to implement the expansion in a manner to promote the school's financial sustainability; and*
- (4) board capacity and an administrative and management plan to implement its expansion.*

To that end, the school must provide a complete description of the proposed expansion as outlined in the application along with any additional information required to demonstrate the above.

The CSD will review the full application to determine whether requirements have been met, which will be evidenced by Overall Section Ratings of Meets in all five areas of the application review rubric. (See ACNW Expansion Application Review Rubric for ACNW's evaluation criteria.) The CSD will produce a Summary Report, which compiles the findings from the evaluation. The report will contain a recommendation regarding approval of the Expansion Application. The CSC will review the Evaluation Report and make a recommendation to the full ACNW Board, which will make the final decision on the application. Should the ACNW Board grant approval, it will direct the CSD to use information provided in the application along with additional necessary information to submit a Supplemental Affidavit on behalf of the school to MDE for final approval.

Implementation of Expansion

Once the Supplemental Affidavit is approved, ACNW will monitor the school's progress as it implements the expansion according to the plan outlined in the Expansion Application. To this end, ACNW will require the school to develop and maintain an implementation checklist specific to the approved expansion. ACNW will monitor the school's activities related to expansion to ensure the expansion is successful. In the event milestones related to the expansion are not met according to the timeline established in the implementation plan and checklist, ACNW may, at its own discretion, decide to postpone the opening of the new site or the implementation of the new grade levels. The school may also decide to postpone the opening of the new site or the implementation of the new grade levels on its own in order to have more time to successfully execute the expansion.

Submission of Application

An email containing an electronic version of the application 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.

**Audubon Center of the North Woods
Notice of Intent to Submit Application for
Grade Level and/or Site Expansion**

Date:

School:

Check the box(es) that relate to the proposed expansion:

Grade level Site

Briefly describe the proposed expansion. Include additional grade levels to be served and/or proposed location of the additional site along with other relevant information.

Provide evidence that the school’s board of directors has engaged in substantive discussion and consideration of the proposed expansion, including formal board action to move forward with a Notice of Intent to ACNW. Include meeting minutes as attachments or indicate the dates of the meetings in which the board engaged in such discussion and consideration (if minutes have already been submitted to ACNW via Epicenter). In addition, board members present at the meeting at which this NOI was approved must sign below (add additional lines as necessary).

*By our signatures below, we affirm that this Notice of Intent to submit an application for expansion was approved by majority vote of the board in public session on **DATE**.*

Board Member Signature

Board Member Signature

Board Member Signature

Board Member Signature

Board Member Signature

Board Member Signature

Board Member Signature

Board Member Signature

Submit to admin@auduboncharterschools.org no later than May 1. If the deadline falls on a weekend or non-business day, the deadline moves to the following business day. A Notice of Intent received after the deadline may result in disqualification.

Board Chair Signature

School Leader Signature

**Audubon Center of the North Woods
Application for Grade Level and/or Site Expansion
Cover Page**

Date:

School:

Check the box(es) that relate to the proposed expansion:

Grade level Site

Board members present at the meeting at which this application was approved must sign below (add additional lines as necessary).

*By our signatures below, we affirm that this application for expansion was approved by majority vote of the board in public session on **DATE**.*

Board Member Signature

Board Member Signature

Board Member Signature

Board Member Signature

Board Member Signature

Board Member Signature

Board Member Signature

Board Member Signature

Submit to admin@auduboncharterschools.org no later than August 1. If the deadline falls on a weekend or non-business day, the deadline moves to the following business day. An application received after the deadline may result in disqualification.

Board Chair Signature

School Leader Signature

Audubon Center of the North Woods Application for Grade Level and/or Site Expansions

Directly address each section below that is required for your expansion request as indicated by ACNW's response to the school's Notice of Intent to Submit Application for Grade/Level and/or Site Expansion. Responses should be concise and comprehensive.

Part A. Expansion Description, Need, and Demand

1. Describe the proposed expansion.
 - a. Specify the additional grade levels or site(s) requested.
 - b. Specify the additional number of students that would be served.
 - c. Describe the new program(s) to be offered as part of the requested expansion.
 - d. Discuss how this expansion will help your school meet its mission.
 - e. Describe how the proposed expansion will impact the school's instructional approach.
 - f. Describe how the proposed expansion will improve all pupil learning and all student achievement and improve service overall to students and families.
 - g. Describe how the proposed expansion will include environmental education programming consistent with ACNW expectations.
 - h. Include how the proposed expansion will impact the school's current contractual goals. As appropriate, provide new proposed goals.
 - i. Describe any other staffing changes that will occur including job descriptions and qualifications for any new hires or positions.
 - j. Describe the facility requirements for this expansion, 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. For a grade level expansion, describe how the school's current facilities will meet those needs. For a site expansion, include a comprehensive discussion of potential locations and scenarios to meet those needs. In most instances, this will require multiple scenarios.
2. Provide evidence that the proposed expansion is supported by need and projected enrollment.
 - a. Provide a table that includes annual enrollment projections with and without the proposed expansion. This should be for as many years as needed to achieve full implementation of the expansion.
 - b. Provide evidence to document need and demand for this expansion, including the following:
 - i. Waiting list numbers.
 - ii. Evidence of interest from current or prospective families and community level support for this expansion 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.
 - iii. Enrollment information of nearby schools that serve students represented by the proposed expansion.
 - iv. Discussion of how this expansion fulfills an unmet need in the community.
 - c. Describe marketing and recruitment strategies to be implemented to ensure equitable access for all students and enrollment targets will be met.

Part B. Current Academic Performance

1. Provide evidence of a longitudinal record of demonstrated student academic performance and growth on statewide assessments under chapter 120B or on other academic assessments that

measure longitudinal student performance and growth approved by the charter school's board of directors and agreed upon with the authorizer.

2. Provide evidence that academic performance and growth has been demonstrated across student groups.

Part C. Financial Management Plan

1. Provide analysis that the school is fiscally sound and has the financial capacity to implement the proposed expansion.
 - a. Provide information demonstrating the school has sound financial health.
 - b. Provide at least a four-year budget (starting with the next fiscal year) with and without the proposed expansion. If full implementation of the expansion will go beyond four years, extend the budget model as needed. This budget should be a line-item report, subtotaled by program.
 - c. Provide a comprehensive budget narrative that addresses the differences in the two budgets and provides assumptions used in developing the budgets.

Part D. Governance and Management Plan

1. Provide evidence that the charter school has the management capacity to carry out its expansion.
 - a. Provide evidence that the school's board of directors has approved the application for the proposed expansion by completing the Application Cover Page.
 - b. Describe the capacity of the board and management to implement the proposed expansion including any anticipated changes to the organizational structure.
 - c. Provide an implementation plan that includes clearly defined roles and responsibilities, as well as timelines, milestones, and key activities related to the proposed expansion.
 - d. Discuss potential challenges related to the proposed expansion and possible solutions to address those challenges.

**Audubon Center of the North Woods
Notice of Intent to Submit Application for
Grade Level and/or Site Expansion
Review Rubric**

Upon receipt of the Notice of Intent to Submit Application for Grade Level and/or Site Expansion by a school, ACNW Charter School Division staff will review the school’s performance to determine whether to invite the school to submit a full application. Should the school clearly not meet the required threshold in any area below, it will not be invited to submit a full application.

Performance Area	Evidence clearly shows the school does not meet this threshold. The school will not be invited to submit a full application.	Evidence is unclear. The school must provide additional information in the full application.	Evidence clearly shows the school meets this threshold. No additional information is needed in the full application.
Academic: A longitudinal record of demonstrated student academic performance and growth on statewide assessments under chapter 120B or on other academic assessments that measure longitudinal student performance and growth approved by the charter school's board of directors and agreed upon with the authorizer.			
Environmental Education: A record of demonstrated progress on environmental education goals as outlined in the charter contract.			
Financial: A history of sound school finances in terms of financial management and financial health.			
Operations: A history of sound school operations, governance, and compliance.			

**Audubon Center of the North Woods
Application for Grade Level and/or Site Expansions
Review Rubric**

School Name:		
Strengths:		
Weaknesses:		
Questions:		
Overall Recommendation	Denial	Approval
Narrative Justification of Recommendation:		

I. Expansion Description, Need, and Demand

Strengths			
Weaknesses			
Questions			
	Inadequate	Approaches	Meets
• The application includes a complete description of the new program(s) to be offered as part of the requested expansion.			
• The application includes a clear description of how this expansion will help the school meet its mission, the primary purpose of charter schools, and improve overall service to families.			
• The application includes a description of how the proposed expansion will impact the instructional program and staffing.			
• The application includes proposed new academic contractual goals as appropriate.			
• The application includes information on how the proposed expansion will include environmental education programming consistent with ACNW expectations.			
• The application includes a description of facility needs for the expansion and a comprehensive discussion of potential locations and scenarios to meet those needs.			
• Enrollment projections are reasonable.			
• The application provides compelling evidence of the need and demand for the proposed expansion.			
• The marketing and recruitment plan presented in the application ensures equitable access for all students and is sufficient to meet enrollment projections.			
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 expansion.
- **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 implement the expansion.

II. Academic Performance

Strengths			
Weaknesses			
Questions			
	Inadequate	Approaches	Meets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACNW has evidence of a longitudinal record of demonstrated student academic performance and growth on statewide assessments under chapter 120B or on other academic assessments that measure longitudinal student performance and growth approved by the charter school's board of directors and agreed upon with the authorizer. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACNW has evidence that all student groups have demonstrated performance and growth on statewide assessments or on other academic assessments. 			
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 expansion.
- 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 implement the expansion.

III. Financial Management Plan

Strengths			
Weaknesses			
Questions			
	Inadequate	Approaches	Meets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACNW has evidence of a history of sound school finances – both in terms of financial management and financial health or a plan from the school to address any areas of concern. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The budget for the expansion is comprehensive, reasonable for the proposed expansion, and viable for overall school 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 implement the expansion.
- 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 implement the expansion.

IV. Governance and Management Plan

Strengths			
Weaknesses			
Questions			
	Inadequate	Approaches	Meets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACNW has evidence of a history of sound school operations, governance, and compliance or a plan from the school to address any areas of concern. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application includes a description of any changes to the school's organization structure stemming from the proposed expansion. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application includes a description of the board and staff's capacity to implement the proposed expansion. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application includes an implementation plan that provides clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, milestones, and activities for the proposed expansion. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application includes evidence that the school has considered potential challenges related to the proposed expansion and offers possible solutions to address those challenges. 			
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 expansion.
- 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 implement the expansion.

V. Environmental Education Performance

Strengths			
Weaknesses			
Questions			
	Inadequate	Approaches	Meets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACNW has evidence that the school is making substantial progress on environmental education goals as outlined in the charter contract or a plan from the school to address any areas of concern. 			
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 expansion.
- 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 implement the expansion.