



# PHASE II

# NEW CHARTER SCHOOL

# APPLICATION GUIDE

**Office of Educational Opportunity**

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Background**

The Office of Educational Opportunity (OEO) was created through the Wisconsin Legislature in 2015 as part of the biannual budget Act 55 and amended in 2017 to allow for statewide authorization of the operation of charter schools and serves as the review and monitoring office as defined by legislation.

We would like to extend our appreciation to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Office of Charter Schools, National Association of Charter School Authorizers, and WI Resource Center for Charter Schools, whose applications and processes served as models. This application initiates the OEO vision and core values.

As part of the Universities of Wisconsin, the OEO interprets its legislative responsibilities to authorize charter schools that have a potential to provide high quality education to all students and address the critical issues in education our state and local communities face.

The OEO vision is to authorize high performing charter schools that instill the Wisconsin Idea by incubating new educational opportunities, sharing what we learn with PK-20 stakeholders, and supporting efforts to close opportunity and achievement gaps. We connect stakeholders with the opportunity to create, lead, or attend high-quality public schools, while leveraging the expertise and resources from the university, state government, local practitioners, and national experts to improve K-12 practices.

### **Mission**

The OEO exists to expand access to high-quality innovative educational opportunities for students, families, and communities across Wisconsin by authorizing and overseeing public charter schools that meet local needs, interests, and demands. It is our goal to improve the education outcomes for students, especially students historically underserved and who may not have access to high quality or community-desired educational options.

### **New School Priorities**

The OEO aims to expand learning opportunities for students in Wisconsin; therefore, we seek high quality new school applications from individuals and groups who have the skill, capacity, and vision to initiate and sustain high quality, innovative public charter schools. Successful applications will present plans that provide all students, including students with disabilities and students identified as English learners, with a quality education that develops the whole child, ensures efficient use of public resources, and demonstrates best practices to increase educational opportunity.

The OEO is specifically interested in charter applications when one or more of the following conditions exists in the communities/local school districts it proposes to serve:

- The applicant proposes a new or innovative school model/academic program that aims to close opportunity and achievement gaps by deploying research-based educational practices. The applicant demonstrates students' needs are not currently being addressed in their local school district and how the proposed model/academic program will address them.
- A district has at least one school that received "Fails to Meet Expectations," consistent with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Report Card, for at least two consecutive years.

Consideration would only be given to prospectuses which target the grade levels of the district school(s) that Fails to Meet Expectations.

In addition, OEO seeks charter school applications that prioritize the following additional statutory purposes as outlined in WI §118.40(3m)

- Give preference in awarding contracts for the operation of charter schools other than the charter school established under a contract with the director under sub. (2x) (cm) to those charter schools that serve children at risk, as defined in s. 118.153 (1) (a).

The OEO and Universities of Wisconsin consider the following core values to be essential to the development of charter schools authorized by the OEO:

**Innovation:** The Educational Program or its essential design elements should be innovative, grounded in research and/or theory, and has been or is likely to be rigorous, engaging, and effective for the anticipated student population.

**Incubation:** The Educational Program promises to be a leading incubator for innovative teaching methods, curricula, organizational design, technologies, and other ways to meet students' diverse needs, enabling school models to be custom-tailored to the specific values, cultures and circumstances of their local communities.

**Opportunity:** The Educational Program comprehends and responds to the needs, shared challenges, and educational gaps in communities by providing high quality options for students and their families, particularly underserved populations. The proposed charter school population reflects the diversity of the community it plans to serve.

**Collaboration:** The charter school should be developed with and for the community it plans to serve. The proposed school should demonstrate clear input, interest, and collaboration between and among the families, community members, and local community organizations, including student voice when applicable.

**Integrity:** The administration and board of directors of the charter school should embody principles of effective leadership and demonstrate the ability to solve complex educational issues to achieve both academic and social outcomes for the students, families and communities it serves.

## Phase II: New Charter School Application Guidelines and Timeline

An application can only be submitted after the applicant's prospectus has been approved by the OEO.

Bringing a charter school concept to reality can take up to 24 months of planning. This planning is best accomplished with a team of dedicated and committed individuals/organization that can meet and sustain the rigorous operational and planning requirements. These next pages detail the New School Application process, timeline, and submission requirements.

Note that applicants seeking charters for schools serving less than 50 students will be discouraged due to fiscal challenges of very small enrollment programs.

### Before Submitting Phase II: New Charter School Application

1. Download and review OEO Phase II: New Charter School Application. Application must address all components of application and include all required attachments.
2. Contact OEO Director for technical assistance as needed, [cynthia.gonzalez@wisconsin.edu](mailto:cynthia.gonzalez@wisconsin.edu).
3. Connect with The Wisconsin Resource Center for Charter Schools (WRCCS) to assist with questions regarding regulations of operating an Independent Charters School in WI. [www.wrccs.org](http://www.wrccs.org)
4. Applicants must become familiar and adhere to Wisconsin statutes which govern charter school formation and operation, [118.40 Charter schools](#) :
  - Each charter school shall be governed by a governing board that is a party to the contract with the authorizing entity.
  - Independent Charter Schools (ICS) must be nonsectarian in their programs, admissions policies, employment practices and all other operations.
  - An ICS may not charge tuition.
  - An ICS may not discriminate in admission or deny participation in any program or activity on the basis of a person's sex, race, religion, national origin, ancestry, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation or physical, mental, emotional or learning disability.
  - Schools that are oversubscribed must establish a selection lottery to ensure equal access to all students.
5. Review the Wisconsin Charter School Program (WCSP) Grant Application administered by the DPI. OEO application content can be used to apply for WCSP. OEO highly encourages applicants to simultaneously apply for the vital WCSP planning year funding.

### Timeline

The chart below outlines the timeline for OEO's Phase II: New Charter School Application. Should the OEO need to adjust timelines, applicants will be notified in advance.

Date	Activity
January 13, 2025	Phase II: New Charter School Application Due
January 14, 2025	Applicants notified if the application was incomplete or will be reviewed by Application Review Committee.
January 14-February 2025	Application Review Committee reviews application.

Late February 2025 <i>Optional, but highly encouraged to apply for funding.</i>	WCSP grant application due, the applicant team does not need a final approval from the OEO to apply for this grant. The OEO will issue a letter stating the applicant team can apply for funding, pending approval.
February - March 2025	Capacity Interview with application team.
April 2025	OEO director shares committee recommendation to the Universities of Wisconsin President for final approval.
No later than May 2025	Applicant notified of OEO final decision.
March – May 2025	*If the applicant team receives a 'Conditional Approval', the applicant will submit additional documentation for approval during this period.

**New Charter School Application Submission Requirements**

Applicants must complete all required sections of the New Charter School Application. Applicants are expected to review the application requirements closely.

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

**Submission of Application**

Applicants must send an electronic copy of the application including all attachments in PDF versions via email to [cynthia.gonzalez@wisconsin.edu](mailto:cynthia.gonzalez@wisconsin.edu). Once an application is received, applicants will be notified if the application is incomplete or will be reviewed by the Application Review Committee.

**Due Date**

The New Charter School Application must be submitted via email by January 13, 2025, no later than 5:00 p.m. (CST). No late applications will be accepted. Any application submitted after 5:00 p.m. CST on the last day of the application cycle will be rejected. Applicants are encouraged to have legal counsel as part of their planning process and have legal counsel review the application prior to submission. The application document will be important during the development of the charter contract.

**Page Limit**

The application **may not exceed 100 pages in length**. Page limits do not apply to required attachments. Please limit attachments to those requested.

**Application 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
- Please limit attachments to those requested and ensure the attachment is clearly labeled.

**Data**

Tables, graphs, and any other data provided in the prospectus must be clearly presented, explained, and directly relevant to the text. Any pictures or graphs that contain text within the picture may be less than 11-point font.

**Required Attachments**

- Community Partnerships
- Evidence of parent and community interest in the school. This could include 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.
- Enrollment Policy
- Discipline Policy and Plan
- Resume/CV of principal/head of school (if identified)
- Provide principal/head of school job description, if not identified.
- Organizational Chart
- Management agreement or other comprehensive service agreement (if applicable)
- New Board Member resumes
- Board governance Code of Ethics and Conflict of Interest policy
- Articles of Incorporation
- Proposed Board bylaws
- Facility MOU or other proof of intent to secure a specific facility, if applicable
- Revenue and expenditure budget for the first five years of operation and planning year, including staffing plan.