



PHASE 1

NEW CHARTER SCHOOL

PROSPECTUS APPLICATION

GUIDE

Office of Educational Opportunity

Van Hise Hall, 1220 Linden Drive

Madison, WI 53706

608-262-8887 | www.wisconsin.edu/oeo

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Introduction

Background

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

As part of the Universities of Wisconsin, the Office of Educational Opportunity (OEO) interprets its legislative responsibilities to authorize charter schools that have a potential to improve the educational outcomes for students, especially students who do not have access to high quality or community desired educational outcomes. Charter schools must have programs that provide quality education to all students and address the critical issues in education our state and local communities face.

The OEO seeks to identify strong charter applications that have the potential to instill the Wisconsin Idea by incubating new or innovative educational programs to address specific community needs that are currently not being addressed or met, supporting programs that have promise of closing opportunity and achievement gaps, and fostering programs that have the potential to disseminate successful practices among PK-20 education stakeholders.

Mission

The Office of Educational Opportunity's mission, in partnership with community organizations, parents, educators, and dedicated individuals, is to provide options for students and families to access quality educational programs. Through authorizing and overseeing innovative charter schools across Wisconsin, the OEO's goal is to expand access to high-quality educational programs that improve educational outcomes and address local needs, interests, and demands.

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 close opportunity and achievement gaps.

The OEO will consider charter options when one or more of the following conditions exists in the communities or local school districts the proposal aims to serve:

- A new or innovative educational program grounded in evidence-based practices, that presents educational options to address specific needs that are not being addressed within the district.

- A district has at least one school that received “Fails to Meet Expectations,” consistent with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Report Card data 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 new or 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 I: Prospectus Application Guide

Bringing a charter school concept to reality can take up to 24 months of planning. As indicated earlier, 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 prospectus application process, timeline, and submission requirements.

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

Before Submitting Phase I: Prospectus Application, applicants are encouraged to:

1. Become familiar with Wisconsin statutes which govern charter school formation and operation, particularly [118.40 Charter schools](#).
2. Schedule a meeting with the OEO Director at cynthia.gonzalez@wisconsin.edu to discuss the application process.
3. Visit and connect with The Wisconsin Resource Center for Charter Schools (WRCCS) to learn about chartering in Wisconsin: www.wrccs.org.
4. Conduct a Community Needs Analysis prior to submitting prospectus to determine any needs and demand for the proposed school in the community it plans to serve. See: [Navigating Your Community Needs Analysis](#)
5. Download and review the OEO Phase 1: New Charter School Prospectus Application and Rubric.

Prospectus Timeline

The chart below outlines the timeline for OEO's Phase I: New Charter School Prospectus Application. The application should be submitted approximately two years prior to the planned opening. For example, a school wishing to open in the Fall of 2027 must submit its Prospectus in the summer of 2025.

As all approved applicants are required to have a planning year, the OEO strategically aligns its application timeline with the Wisconsin Charter School Program (WCSP) grant funding cycle. Synchronizing schedules allows prospective independent charter schools to simultaneously apply for the vital WCSP planning year funding.

| Date | Activity |
|-------------------|--|
| July 28, 2025 | Phase I: Prospectus Application Due |
| August 1, 2025 | Applicants notified if prospectus was incomplete or will be reviewed by Application Review Committee. |
| August 2025 | Application Review Committee reviews prospectus. OEO Director shares committee recommendation to the Universities of Wisconsin President. |
| September 5, 2025 | Applicant notified of the OEO final decision. |

Completeness Review

Once prospectuses are submitted to the OEO, they will undergo a review for completeness on the *due date* (not prior to the due date). If submissions are incomplete (i.e., missing responses to required sections, sections left blank, etc.), the submission will be excluded from further review and the applicant will be required to submit a new application the following year. Applicants will be notified of the completeness or incompleteness of their submission per the Prospectus Timeline. Note that the findings of completion are not indicative of the submission's quality.

Prospectus Submission Requirements

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. Once a prospectus is received, applicants will be notified if the prospectus is incomplete or will be reviewed by the Application Review Committee.

Due Date

The prospectus must be submitted via email by July 28, 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.

Page Limit

The prospectus may not exceed 20 pages in length including cover page and required attachments. This does not include appendices.

Application Format and Organization

- 8 ½" x 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.

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.

Appendices: All appendices must be referenced in the text of the prospectus and clearly labeled.

Required Attachments

- School Founders/Board members resume.
- The proposed management agreement or other comprehensive service agreement (if applicable).

Optional Attachment:

- Community Needs Assessment