
Delivering Achievement, Choice & Accountability

The Michigan Department of Education received an award from the United States Department of Education to support the development and implementation of new charter schools in Michigan. The Michigan Department of Education makes competitive grants available to individuals and groups interested in opening a charter school. Successful applicants will be awarded up to \$110,000 for planning and two additional grants of up to \$200,000 for charter implementation activities.

The Michigan Department of Education organizes review teams to evaluate the grant applications.

The application has eight major sections that the applicant must address. Each section has questions the applicant must answer. To follow is a listing of the eight sections:

- Assessment of Community Needs
- Student Population
- Educational Program
- Attendance and Population
- Assessment and Evaluation
- Project Team
- Financial
- Conclusion

Note: MAPSA encourages all groups to consider that immediate answers may and should not be available for ALL of the grant application questions, depending on your group's current level of school development. If you are in this situation and uncertain about your plans, please provide a thorough, well-thought out response on how you will utilize the grant monies rather than making quick decisions that may need to be changed in the future or that don't provide enough information to the grant reviewers, resulting in a decreased score. If you don't know, say you don't know and further explain how using grant funds to get the right answers will make your school most successful.

Here's an example scenario of this for the educational program section. If your group has not yet determined which curriculum they will be using, rather than plugging one in that you have not thoroughly evaluated and researched, respond with your plans for which curricula you are researching, how you will evaluate each one, how each will impact your school model and/or fit with the school model, any plans you have for observing the curriculum in existing school settings, etc. It is important that your plans reflect to the grant reviewers that your efforts will be in-depth and very thorough in research while effectively using the grant monies.

The grant reviewers use rubrics to rate the grant applications. The narrative responses to the grant questions are scored as follows:

- 4 Points Excellent
- 3 Points Good
- 2 Points Average
- 1 Point Weak
- 0 Points Not Addressed

The intent of this document is to provide applicants with information and guidance that will assist them in completing the grant application. Advice will be given in each of the eight grant areas the applicant must address. Before this advice is presented, here are the major "Dos and Don'ts" that applicants should know:

- Reviewers like easy reading. All paragraphs should have a maximum of five sentences.
- Include graphs, charts, and other visuals as a means to make your point clear.
- Incorporate color graphics in strategic places.
- Use spell check.
- Cite the source of any references made in the application.
- Use up-to-date research to reinforce the claims made in the application.
- Check the grammar.
- Avoid unexplained acronyms.
- Avoid words like "may" and use words like "will."
- Answer all grant questions.
- Write clearly, accurately and concisely.
- Do not ramble. Rambling "turns off" the grant reviewers.
- Repeat the questions asked in the application. Place your response under each question.

The remainder of this document will provide an overview of what to include in each of the eight sections of the grant application.

Section One: Assessment of Community Need

The applicant is required to describe the **demographics**, **identified needs**, and **strengths** and **weaknesses** in the geographic area where the charter school will be located. To follow are items that may be included in this section:

- Racial composition
- % of children that live in poverty
- % of children that qualify for free or reduced meals
- Income range (low, medium, high) of families
- % of children living in one parent households
- Educational attainment of adults
- Employment rates
- Overall crime rates
- Youth crime rates
- Dropout rates
- Closures of neighborhood public/private schools
- Student to teacher ratio of local area school(s)
- % of people that own their homes
- Availability of childcare facilities
- Available community resources the school will partner with
- Resources not available in the community the charter school will provide
- Community strengths
- Community weaknesses

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An excellent resource for accessing school district demographic information is the National Center for Education Statistics. The web address is www.nces.ed.gov/surveys/sdds/index.asp

Many local school districts administer parent surveys to determine parent satisfaction as well as real and perceived needs of the families they serve. Review the results of the survey and incorporate findings that demonstrate a need for a new public school option in the local area.

Report any glaring weaknesses found in the neighborhood schools - both traditional public, private and charter. Report the MEAP scores and Adequate Yearly Progress of the schools if the scores and AYP indicate the schools are failing the students they serve.

Determine if the neighborhood schools provide before and after school childcare programs, tutorial programs, enrichment programs, parent education programs, after school clubs, athletics, community service programs, etc. If the charter school intends to offer any or all of these programs/activities, state this in the application. By doing such, the applicant demonstrates the need for the proposed charter school.

Consider surveying the local community to determine if there is a need for the proposed charter school. Include the title of the survey, population surveyed, how the survey was administered, and survey findings that demonstrate the need for the proposed charter school.

Part two of Section One requires the applicant to **list** and **describe** (public, private, charter) the existing schools in the local area. A suggestion is to use a radius of eight miles. When describing the existing schools, include the following in your description:

- Name of school
- Address of school
- Number of students
- Grade range
- Student to teacher ratio
- AYP status
- Focus, if any

After completing the above referenced school descriptions, the applicant must state what will be the competitive advantages that sets the proposed charter apart from its competition. This portion of the application is **critical**. The applicant must prove that the proposed charter will offer programs, services, educational opportunities, and parental involvement activities that will draw families to enroll their children in the school.

In summary, Section One must convince the reviewers that the proposed charter school will do things differently as a means to meet the identified needs of the local community

Section Two:

The first part of this section requires the applicant to list the **grade range** the proposed charter school will initially offer as well as plans for **future growth**. Place this information in a graph or chart. Include the following:

- Initial grades offered, number of students in each grade
- Year by year expansion plan for the next five years, include grade(s) and number of students

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- Include the minimum and maximum number of students the school will enroll for each listed grade and school year

After completing the chart, the applicant must state how the grade plan has been shaped by the developmental needs of the students most likely to attend the school.

Part two of this section requires the applicant to identify where the anticipated students who will attend the school are currently being educated. The applicant must also include the reasons why families will choose the proposed charter school. In other words, what will the school do and offer that sets it apart from the competition? What benefits will students and families experience as a result of choosing the proposed school? What are the community and educational needs the proposed school will meet? What will the school do differently that will attract students and families?

The applicant must also state the percentage of the anticipated student population who will qualify for free or reduced meals. The National Center for Education Statistics web site includes the percentage of students in each school district who qualify for free or reduced meals. Use the figure given for the school district where the proposed charter will be located.

www.nces.ed.gov/surveys/sdds.index.asp

Section Three: Educational Program

Describe the **vision**, **mission**, and **educational goals** of the proposed charter.

Vision statements are brief descriptions of the desired outcomes of the developmental team. Vision statements are generally one to three sentences in length. When writing vision statements, think of the word **will**. The following questions are designed to assist the development team in writing vision statements:

- What will students learn?
- How will students behave?
- What will students believe?
- What will students be able to accomplish?
- How will parents be involved in the life of the charter school?
- How will teachers teach?
- What will be the results of out of class programs and activities?
- What impact will the charter school have on the local community?
- What will be the educational results of the curriculum?

A mission statement provides the framework to express what the charter school stands for as well as the purpose of the school's existence. Mission statements should be explicit but concise and written in one or two sentences. The mission statement should be written in the present tense and focus on the here and now. An example of a well-written mission statement is as follows:

First Street Academy prepares students for the 21'st century by promoting excellence in academics and character development through the use of a researched based curriculum and character education program.

After presenting the mission statement, further describe how this mission will benefit those associated with the academy.

Educational goals focus on anticipated outcomes. The goals must be:

- Reasonable and attainable
- Include the targeted population
- State what the performance standard is
- Reflect how the performance standard will be measured

To follow is an example of an educational goal:

80% of the student population that has attended the Academy for two or more years will gain at least 1.3 years of academic growth as evidenced by the results of the Metropolitan Achievement Test given in the fall and spring of each school year.

The next part of Section Three requires the academy to describe how the developmental team evaluated the chosen curricula and the instructional approaches used to deliver the curricula as well as the criteria used to do the evaluation. To follow are suggestions related to this topic:

- Describe the various curricula and instructional approaches evaluated by the developmental team.
- List the criteria used to evaluate the curricula and instructional approaches.
- Present research based reasons why the selected curriculum was chosen and has proven to be effective in schools that have a similar targeted population as anticipated in the proposed charter school.
- State why the selected curriculum and instructional approaches will facilitate the attainment of the school's educational goals.

The next part of Section Three requires a general description of the selected **curricula**. If purchasing curricula, the company that developed the curricula will have literature the development team can use to complete this requirement. If the proposed school is developing its own curriculum, the development team is responsible for completing this task.

Many charter applications list the textbooks used as the selected curricula. Textbooks are one tool to deliver the curricula. The grant reviewers are looking for the specific name (Core Knowledge, Micro Society, Discovery) of the selected curricula. After specifying the name of the selected curricula, present the reasons why the curricula will assist students in mastering the Michigan Grade Level Content Standards or the High School Content Expectations. The expectations as well as other curricula related standards and frameworks can be accessed at www.michigan.gov/mde.

Click: Curriculum and Instruction

Click: The curricula related topic the development team wants to research

The next part of Section Three requires the applicant to describe the **instructional design**. In other words, what methods/strategies will the classroom teachers use to deliver the selected curricula. Examples include differentiated instruction, block scheduling, hands-on learning activities, small group instruction, community service learning projects, etc.

If purchasing the curricula, the company that produced the curricula most likely developed the instructional design used to most effectively deliver curricula content and educational content expectations.

After describing the instructional design, outline the steps the school will take to ensure that teachers understand and implement the instructional model chosen. A suggestion is to list the proposed dates, purposes of, and who will present

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professional development activities designed to increase the knowledge and skills of classroom teachers as they prepare to implement the instructional model. Also, describe how classroom instruction will be monitored to ensure teachers instruct students according to the selected instructional design.

The next part of Section Three requires the applicant to describe the **support services** the school will offer. To follow are examples of support services that may be included:

- Before and after school childcare
- Before and after school tutorials
- Parent education programs
- Summer school
- Preschool program
- Computer training
- After school enrichment programs
- Mentoring programs
- School clubs
- Extracurricular programs and clubs
- Parent support network

After describing each support service/program, explain how the service/program will enhance the overall quality of the school.

The last part of Section Three requires the applicant to describe how the charter school will provide high quality **special education services** to students with special needs. This part also asks the applicant to describe how the charter school intends to participate in its ISD's county specific special education plan. Here are some suggestions for completing this part of Section Three:

- Describe how special education students will be identified.
- Describe the procedures that will be used for making special education referrals.
- Describe how students will be instructed in the least restrictive environment.
- Describe how all Individual Education Plans will be monitored.
- Describe whether the school will directly employ or contract the services of special education professionals.
- Describe the direct and indirect special education services provided by the regional ISD.

Suggestion: Meet with your Regional ISD's Special Education Director to determine the direct and indirect special education programs and services offered through the ISD and include this in the application in this section. Also, this part of the application requires you to describe how the school intends to participate in the county wide **special education plan**. During this suggested meeting, ask the Special Education Director to outline the procedures the proposed charter school will follow in order to be a member of the county wide special education planning team. Include the procedures in this part of the application.

Here are two great web sites for finding out more about special education rules and requirements:

United States Department of Education

<http://idea.ed.gov/>

Michigan Department of Education

www.michigan.gov/mde

Click: Special Education & Early Intervention Services

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Section Four: Attendance and Participation

The first part of this section requires the applicant to list the ***anticipated date*** the school will open and provide a descriptive of the ***yearly calendar*** and ***school day schedule***.

When developing the yearly calendar, include a month-by-month schedule that lists:

- Parent conferences
- Dates students will be tested; both MEAP and other standardized tests
- Any half days
- Winter and spring break days
- Holidays
- Professional development days for staff

When developing the daily schedule, consider including the following:

- Time the building will open in the morning
- Time classes will begin
- Recess times
- Class time
- Lunch time
- Time school is over
- Time (if any) for after school tutorials

The next part of Section Four requires the applicant to describe the school's ***advertising*** and ***recruitment*** plans and the methods the school will use to retain the students that enroll. To follow are common ways charter schools have used for advertising and recruiting students:

- Billboards
- Targeted flyers to select zip code areas
- Open houses
- Cable television advertisements
- Radio announcements
- Booths stationed in malls and other shopping areas
- Recruiting visits to day care centers
- Advertisements in local newspapers and shopping guides
- Lawn signs
- Neighborhood coffee chats
- Church bulletins

After describing how the proposed school will recruit students, the applicant is required to describe how the school will retain the students who enroll.

The last part of Section Four requires the applicant to describe how the proposed school will **involve parents** in the design of the school and the education of the enrolled students. Here are a few suggestions related to parental involvement:

- Recruit parents to serve on school committees
- Recruit parents to serve on the Student Handbook writing team
- Form a PTO
- Recruit parents to be mentors
- Recruit parents to serve as classroom volunteers
- Recruit parents to serve as classroom speakers
- Recruit parents to serve on the School Improvement Plan team
- Host family reading and mathematics nights
- Host family fitness nights

Education World has an excellent web site for increasing parental [involvement](http://www.education-world.com/a_specialparent_involvement.shtml).
www.education-world.com/a_specialparent_involvement.shtml

The Michigan Department of Education also has a web site that provides valuable information on parental [involvement](http://www.michigan.gov/mde).
www.michigan.gov/mde

Click: Parents and Families

Click: School District Parent Involvement Plan Information

Section Five: Assessment and Evaluation

The first part of this section requires the applicant to describe the **assessment program** the proposed charter school will implement as well as how the assessment results will be used to improve teaching and learning. Keep in mind that you must include MEAP testing in this section as well as how school officials will use MEAP results to improve teaching and classroom learning. The applicant must be very specific when presenting how the school will review MEAP results and the strategies the school will use to address any academic deficiencies identified through this assessment.

The applicant should name the standardized achievement test the school will use to measure the yearly academic growth of the students. Once again, the applicant must be very specific in detailing how the school will use the standardized test results to improve teaching and classroom learning. Be explicit when presenting the strategies that will be employed to address any academic deficiencies identified through this type of assessment.

Other types of assessments schools often use include computer-based assessments, student journals, teacher designed tests, projects, student portfolios, and student presentations.

The second part of this section requires the applicant to describe the anticipated **annual standards** or **measures** of student achievement that the applicant expects. This section also requires the applicant to describe how the applicant will communicate student progress against the standards to students and parents. Examples of annual standards include:

- 75% of the students who have attended the Academy for two or more years will meet or exceed state proficiency standards on the annual MEAP assessment.
- 80% of the students who have attended the Academy for two or more years will gain at least 1.2 years of academic growth per school year as evidenced by the results of the Metropolitan Achievement Test.
- Student attendance rates will be 95% or higher each school year.

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- 80% of the students who have attended the Academy for two or more years will meet the standards set forth by the Presidential Fitness Program.
- 75% or more of the students who have attended the Academy for two or more years will maintain a grade point average of 2.5 or higher.

After listing the anticipated standards, describe how the proposed school will communicate the standards to students and parents.

The last part of Section Five requires the applicant to identify the type of **data** the proposed governance body will collect that is aligned with the Michigan School Improvement Framework. Such data may include the results of parent satisfaction surveys, attendance rates at parent-teacher conferences, student and staff school climate survey results, retention rate of teachers, surveys to measure the benefits of community service projects, etc.

Section Six: Project Team

The first part of this section requires the applicant to list the **names, addresses, and roles** of the developmental team as well as the **strengths, experiences,** and expected **contributions** of each person.

The second part of this section requires the applicant to provide the names of the **non-profit Board of Directors** and provide contact information for each. Identify those who are Board officers.

The third part of this section requires the applicant to describe the anticipated **staffing, management, and governance structure** for the proposed school.

Staffing: Develop a chart that lists the number of regular classroom teachers, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians, administrators, cafeteria workers, counselors, social workers, office workers, and other staff the school anticipates employing during its first year of operation.

Management: Present how the school will be managed. Will the school be self-managed or will the school employ an Educational Service Provider?

Governance Structure: Develop and insert an organizational chart. Underneath the chart, explain the chart in words.

The fourth part of this section requires the applicant to list all anticipated **contractual relationships** the proposed school expects to have to ensure the successful operations of the school. Examples of contractual relationships may include building maintenance, food service, bookkeeping, payroll, fringe benefits, Educational Service Provider, contracted special education services, legal, leases, etc.

The fifth part of this section requires the applicant to describe any prior attempts the developmental team has made to secure a charter. Detail the results if previous attempts were made. If no attempts were made, state this.

Section Six: Facilities

If the developmental team has located a facility, provide the address. Also describe the facility by stating the square footage, number of classrooms, special areas such as a gymnasium, library, multi-purpose room, office space, playground, parking, etc.

After describing the facility, detail whether the facility will be purchased or leased and any financial arrangements that have/will be made to finance the cost of the purchase or lease.

If facility renovations need to be made, provide an estimated budget. Provide a timeline that informs the reviewers when the renovations will start and end.

If the developmental team has not located a facility, the applicant is required to describe the process the developmental team will use to secure a building as well as the criteria the team will use to select the facility.

Section Seven: Financial

The first part of this section requires the applicant to list all anticipated ***preoperational costs***. Preoperational costs are the expenses the developmental team expects to incur prior to the opening of the proposed school. Such costs include, but are not limited to, salaries, facility renovations, classroom furniture, marketing, legal, accounting, textbooks, professional development, office equipment, phone system, printing and copying, classroom and office supplies, computers, staff development, assessment tools, janitorial supplies, etc.

After listing the preoperational expenses, the applicant is required to describe how the expenses will be covered. This may include grants, loans, corporate gifts, etc. When listing the sources to cover expenses, indicate whether the source is secured (provide evidence) or anticipated.

The last part of this section requires the applicant to indicate if the proposed school intends to ***qualify*** for state aid as an operational source of funds.

Section Eight: Conclusion

This section allows the applicant to present any other information that supports the application.