

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools (40 points)

The extent to which—

- (i) The State has a charter school law that does not prohibit or effectively inhibit increasing the number of high-performing charter schools (as defined in this notice) in the State, measured (as set forth in Appendix B) by the percentage of total schools in the State that are allowed to be charter schools or otherwise restrict student enrollment in charter schools;
- (ii) The State has laws, statutes, regulations, or guidelines regarding how charter school authorizers approve, monitor, hold accountable, reauthorize, and close charter schools; in particular, whether authorizers require that student achievement (as defined in this notice) be one significant factor, among others, in authorization or renewal; encourage charter schools that serve student populations that are similar to local district student populations, especially relative to high-need students (as defined in this notice); and have closed or not renewed ineffective charter schools;
- (iii) The State's charter schools receive (as set forth in Appendix B) equitable funding compared to traditional public schools, and a commensurate share of local, State, and Federal revenues;
- (iv) The State provides charter schools with funding for facilities (for leasing facilities, purchasing facilities, or making tenant improvements), assistance with facilities acquisition, access to public facilities, the ability to share in bonds and mill levies, or other supports; and the extent to which the State does not impose any facility-related requirements on charter schools that are stricter than those applied to traditional public schools; and
- (v) The State enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools (as defined in this notice) other than charter schools.

In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (F)(2)(i):

A description of the State's applicable laws, statutes, regulations, or other relevant legal documents.

The number of charter schools allowed under State law and the percentage this represents of the total number of schools in the State.

The number and types of charter schools currently operating in the State.

Evidence for (F)(2)(ii):

- A description of the State’s approach to charter school accountability and authorization, and a description of the State’s applicable laws, statutes, regulations, or other relevant legal documents.
- For each of the last five years:
  - The number of charter school applications made in the State.
  - The number of charter school applications approved.
  - The number of charter school applications denied and reasons for the denials (academic, financial, low enrollment, other).
  - The number of charter schools closed (including charter schools that were not reauthorized to operate).

Evidence for (F)(2)(iii):

- A description of the State’s applicable statutes, regulations, or other relevant legal documents.
- A description of the State’s approach to charter school funding, the amount of funding passed through to charter schools per student, and how those amounts compare with traditional public school per-student funding allocations.

Evidence for (F)(2)(iv):

- A description of the State’s applicable statutes, regulations, or other relevant legal documents.
- A description of the statewide facilities supports provided to charter schools, if any.

Evidence for (F)(2)(v):

A description of how the State enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools (as defined in this notice) other than charter schools.

Recommended maximum response length: Six pages

### Overview and Current Status

Providing students and their families with choices and options in order to access the best possible education is a top priority for Iowa. The State has long provided LEAs and their schools with the opportunity and flexibility to introduce innovative efforts to meet their needs and improve their outcomes. In turn, Iowa's open enrollment law provides families with optimum choice in selecting schools that best serve their needs.

Charter schools are one of several ways in which Iowa has created a climate for successful, innovative schools. The Iowa General Assembly passed the state's charter law in 2002. Under that law, the State Board of Education could approve up to twenty charter school applications, with not more than one per school district.

The Iowa legislature passed Senate File 2033 (See appendix E, page 1) on January 15, 2010 and the Governor signed it into law on the same day. SF 2033 strengthened Iowa's charter school law and allowed for innovation by:

- Removing the current cap of twenty charter school applications
- Lifting the limit of only one charter school per district
- Ending the sunset provision on Iowa's charter law
- Allowing two or more districts collaborating with an AEA to establish an innovation zone.

School-centered governance, autonomy, and a clear purpose and design for how and what students will learn are the essential characteristics of Iowa's charter schools. At the center of the charter is a clear statement of mission, goals, philosophy, values, and principles that serve to guide the creation and operation of the learning environment.

Iowa's charter schools must implement innovative strategies and proven methods for improving student achievement which are developed around local academic content standards and based on effective, research-based methods and strategies.

Each successful innovative learning environment under Iowa’s charter school law embodies a comprehensive design for effective school functioning including data-driven instruction, assessment, classroom management, professional development, parental involvement, school management, and a commitment to creating a positive learning climate. This design shall align with the school’s curriculum, technology, and professional development.

The Iowa charter school application requires a description of the school’s design and delineates mutual agreements among the charter developer, the local school board, and other parties regarding such issues as: budget, employment, contracted services, governance, facilities, special education, content standards, curriculum, and assessment of students.

Evidence for (F)(2)(i)

*A description of the State’s applicable laws, statutes, regulation or other relevant legal documents.*

- Approval Process: Under state law (Iowa Code 256F.1(3)) a charter school may be approved in order to accomplish the following: improve student learning; increase learning opportunities for students; encourage the use of different and innovative methods of teaching; require the measurement of learning outcomes and create different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes; establish new forms of accountability for schools; and create new professional opportunities for teachers and other educators, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.
- Monitoring: The monitoring of charter schools in fulfilling their agreement with the state is an important aspect of their success. In Iowa, the state board of education provides for the ongoing review of a charter contract, and periodic reviews are conducted by the department to ensure continuing compliance. (256F.6(3)) All charter schools receive an annual on-site visit by the Iowa Department of Education, and additional technical assistance visits are available by request.

- Accountability: Accountability and transparency are important factors in monitoring the success of charter schools. In Iowa, charter schools are required to report, at least annually, to the LEA school board, their advisory council, and the state board of education (Iowa Code 256F.10). In addition, the state board of education submits a comprehensive report to the legislature each year which contains the mission statement for each charter school in Iowa, attendance statistics and dropout rate, aggregate assessment test scores, projections of financial stability, the number and qualifications of teachers and administrators, and number of and comments on supervisory visits by the department of education. All reports are public documents.
- Reauthorization: At the end of the initial four-year contract for a charter school in Iowa, the LEA school board that established the charter school may act to renew the contract (Iowa Code 256F). The school board must hold a public hearing on the issue and submit to the department confirmation that a majority of the board voted in favor of the renewal.
- Closing Charter Schools: Charter schools are held accountable in Iowa and can face the revocation or non-renewal of the contract if (Iowa Code 256F.8):
  - The charter school fails to abide by and meet the provisions set forth in the contract, including their educational goals;
  - The school fails to comply with all applicable law;
  - The school fails to meet generally accepted public sector accounting principles; or
  - There exists one or more other grounds for revocation as specified in the contract.

The revocation or non-renewal of a charter can take place in one of three ways:

- The LEA school board considering the contract with its charter school may vote on such action after notifying the advisory council, families, and the teachers and administrators employed by the charter school. The decision of a school board to revoke or fail to renew a charter school contract is subject to appeal.
- The state board of education may revoke a charter school contract, after notifying the LEA school board and advisory council in writing of the grounds for the proposed action.

- A charter school may voluntarily revoke its charter school contract by giving notice to the school board, the advisory council, and the state department of its intent to cease to exist as a charter school for the immediate successive school year.

*The number of charter schools allowed under State law and the percentage this represents of the total number of schools in the State.*

In 2002, the Iowa General Assembly set a cap of ten charter schools. The law was revised in 2008 to increase the cap to twenty charter schools. The law was further revised in 2010 to remove the cap on the number of charter schools, as well as lift the limit of one charter school per district.

A total of seven charter schools currently operate in Iowa, which represents one-half of one percent of the 1,389 elementary, middle school, junior high, and high school buildings in the state during the 2008-09 school year.

*The number and types of charter schools currently operating in the State.*

The following is a list of all charter schools currently operating in Iowa:

**Iowa Central Charter School (11-12th Grade)**

Southeast Webster Community School District  
P.O. Box 49 30850 Paragon Avenue  
Burnside, Iowa 50521-0049  
515-359-2235  
Administrator: Mike Jorgenson

**Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School (9-12th Grade)**

Storm Lake Community School District  
P.O. Box 638  
Storm Lake, Iowa 50588-0638  
Administrator: Michael J. Hanna

**Elma Elementary Charter School ( K -6th Grade)**

Howard-Winneshiek Community School District

P.O. Box 56 120 West Jackson  
Elma, Iowa 52155  
Administrator: Robert Hughes

**Northeast Iowa Charter High School (9-12th Grade)**

West Central Community School District  
P.O. Box 54  
Maynard, Iowa 50655-0054  
563-637-2283  
Administrator: Jim Patera

**Prescott Elementary School (9-12th Grade)**

Dubuque Community School District  
1151 White Street  
Dubuque, Iowa 52001

563-552-4200  
Administrator: Christine McCarron

**Panorama Charter School (9-12th Grade)**  
Panorama Community School District  
701 West Main- P.O. Box 39  
Panora, Iowa 50216  
641-755-2317  
Administrator: Mark Johnson

Sigourney Community School District  
107 W. Marion  
Sigourney, IA 51591  
641-622-2025  
Administrator: Jason Munn

**eSigourney Entrepreneurial Academy for  
Leadership (7-12th Grade)**

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions *(5 points)*

The extent to which the State, in addition to information provided under other State Reform Conditions Criteria, has created, through law, regulation, or policy, other conditions favorable to education reform or innovation that have increased student achievement or graduation rates, narrowed achievement gaps, or resulted in other important outcomes.

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Evidence for (F)(3):

A description of the State's other applicable key education laws, statutes, regulations, or relevant legal documents.

Recommended maximum response length: Two pages