

poverty). Other areas of supplemental weighting include regional and career academies, and district-to-community college course sharing. Finally, IC 280.4 provides additional formula weighting for English language learner (Title III) students.

Conclusion

The commitment of Iowa to increase education funding—during the worst time of the recent economic recession—and increase the per-pupil funding amount, maintain a funding formula tested and proven for its equitability, and utilize methods to provide equitable support for at-risk schools provides a foundation to close any gaps that exist between LEAs, schools, and their students.

(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

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

Overview and Current Status

Providing students and their families with choices and options in order to access the best possible education has been a priority in Iowa for years. 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 the maximum ability to select schools that best serve their needs.

Iowa’s long record of support for innovative schools is consistent with the State’s priority goals in our Race to the Top plan: increase student achievement overall; decrease achievement gaps among student subgroups; increase high school graduation rates; and increase the number of students who complete at least the equivalent of one year of college credit that can be applied toward a degree.

Charter schools are one of several ways in which Iowa has created a climate for successful, innovative schools.

Many innovations that other states must use charter schools to accomplish—from alternative and advanced education programs to lengthening school years—have been realized in Iowa through waivers and exemptions. More than 1,000 exemptions have been granted since 2001. (See Section (F)(2)(v) for further discussion.)

In Iowa, charter schools were first established by the Iowa General Assembly in 2002. Under that law, which was amended in 2008, the State Board of Education could approve up to 20 charter school applications, with no more than one per school district.

Iowa significantly expanded the scope of access to charter schools earlier this year. On January 15, 2010, the Iowa legislature passed Senate File 2033, which Governor Chet Culver signed into law that same day (see attachment (E)(1)–1). Senate File 2033 strengthened Iowa’s charter school law and allowed for additional opportunities for innovation by:

- Removing the current cap of 20 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 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 every 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 the following: budget, employment, contracted services, governance, facilities, special education, content standards, curriculum, and assessment of students.

(F)(2)(i) A description of the State’s applicable laws, statutes, regulation or other relevant legal documents.

The following is a summary of four key components of Iowa law relating to the establishment and governance of charter schools.

Approval Process

Under state law, 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 (IC 256F.1(3)).

Monitoring

In Iowa, the State Board provides for the ongoing review of a charter contract, and periodic reviews are conducted by the Iowa Department of Education (IDE) to ensure continuing compliance (256F.6(3)). All charter schools receive an annual on-site visit by the IDE, and additional technical assistance visits are available by request.

Accountability

Iowa charter schools are required to report, at least annually, to the LEA school board, their advisory council, and the State Board (IC 256F.10). In addition, the State Board submits a comprehensive report to the Iowa legislature each year, which contains the mission statement for each charter school in Iowa, attendance statistics and dropout rates, 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 IDE.

Renewal

At the end of the initial four-year contract for a charter school, the LEA school board that established the charter school may act to renew the contract (IC 256F). The school board must hold a public hearing on the issue and submit to the IDE confirmation that a majority of the board voted in favor of the renewal. Also for renewal, a school must show improvement in

student progress on student assessments over that which existed in the same student population prior to the establishment of the charter school.

Closing Charter Schools

Charter schools are held accountable in Iowa and can face the revocation or non-renewal of the contract if (IC 256F.8):

- The 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;
- There exists one or more other grounds for revocation as specified in the contract; or
- Assessment of student progress, which is administered in accordance with State and locally determined indicators established pursuant to rules adopted by the State Board, does not show improvement in student progress over that which existed in the same student population prior to the establishment of the charter school.

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. Such action is subject to appeal.
- The State Board 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 IDE of its intent to cease as a charter school for the immediate successive school year.

(F)(2)(i) 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 legislature set a cap of 10 charter schools, with a limit of one charter school per LEA. The law was amended in 2008 to increase the cap to 20 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 0.5 percent of the 1,389 elementary, middle school, junior high, and high school buildings in the state during the 2008–2009 school year.

(F)(2)(i) The number and types of charter schools currently operating in the State.

Since Iowa’s Phase One application was submitted, the State Board has approved a charter school application on behalf of the Des Moines Independent Community School District, the state’s largest LEA; this charter school will serve at-risk middle school students.

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

<p>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</p>	<p>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</p>
<p>Prescott Elementary School (9–12th Grade) Dubuque Community School District 1151 White Street Dubuque, Iowa 52001 563-552-4200 Administrator: Christine McCarron</p>	<p>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</p>
<p>Northeast Iowa Charter High School (9–12th Grade) West Central Community School District P.O. Box 54 Maynard, Iowa 50655-0054 563-637-2283</p>	<p>Panorama Charter School (9–12th Grade) Panorama Community School District 701 West Main - P.O. Box 39 Panora, Iowa 50216 641-755-2317</p>

Administrator: Jim Patera	Administrator: Mark Johnson
eSigourney Entrepreneurial Academy for Leadership (7–12th Grade) Sigourney Community School District 107 W. Marion Sigourney, IA 51591 641-622-2025 Administrator: Jason Munn	

(F)(2)(ii) The State has laws, statues, regulations, or guidelines regarding how charter school authorizers approve, monitor, hold accountable, reauthorize and close charter school; 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.

(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, statues, regulations, or other relevant legal documents.

Please refer to the summary of Iowa law included in the evidence for Section (F)(2)(i).

Following are charter school statistics for each of the last five years:

	2005–2006	2006–2007	2007–2008	2008–2009	2009–2010
Charter school applications made	3	0	0 2 2		
Charter school applications approved	2	0	0 0 2		
Charter school applications denied	1 application withdrawn	0 0		1 not eligible 1 did not address criteria	0
Charter schools closed	0 1	voluntary withdrawal	1 voluntary withdrawal	1 voluntary withdrawal	0

(F)(2)(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.

Charter schools in Iowa operate as public schools, with the charter agreement between the State Board and the LEA (IC 256F.6). As such, for the purposes of funding, there is complete equity between charter and non-charter schools in the per-student funding formulas.

(F)(2)(iii) A description of the State’s applicable statutes, regulations, or other relevant legal documents.

The following is a summary of the sections of the Iowa Code pertaining to funding for charter schools in the State:

- **256F.1(1)**: Charter schools shall be part of the State’s program of public education.
- **256F.4(2)(c)**: [A charter school shall be] free of tuition and application fees to Iowa resident students between the ages of five and 21 years.
- **256F.4(2)(e)**: Provide special education services in accordance with Chapter 256B.
- **256F.4(2)(g)**: Be subject to and comply with Chapter 284 relating to the student achievement and teacher quality program. A charter school that complies with Chapter 284 shall receive state moneys or be eligible to receive state moneys as provided in Chapter 284 as if it did not operate under a charter.
- **256F.4(2)(i)**: Be subject to and comply with the provisions of Chapter 285 relating to the transportation of students.
- **S56F.4(7)**: A charter school shall be considered a part of the school district in which it is located for purposes of state school foundation aid pursuant to Chapter 257.
- **256F.5(7)**: The financial plan for the operation of the school including, at a minimum, a listing of the support services the school district will provide, and the charter school’s revenues, budgets, and expenditures.

(F)(2)(iii) 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.

Under Iowa’s school finance formula, the State provides the same amount of per-student funding to charter schools as it does to all public schools.

As discussed in Section F(1)(ii), Iowa's school funding formula is one of the most equitable in the nation. Iowa Code Chapter 257 is the chapter of state law that defines this formula. State law establishes a per-pupil funding amount that is consistent among all schools—including charter schools—and is based on funding allocated divided by certified annual enrollment.

The state’s per pupil funding amounts for the following years were as follows:

- FY 2008: \$5,333
- FY 2009: \$5,546
- FY 2010: \$5,768

In addition, as noted in Section (F)(1)(ii), state law includes provisions for supplemental weighting of certain students in order to generate additional funds on top of the state per-pupil amount. This supplemental weighting provides additional assistance to high-need schools and LEAs. Included on that list are at-risk and alternative schools students (one criterion for defining at-risk students is high-poverty). Other areas of supplemental weighting include regional and career academies, and district-to-community college course sharing. Finally, state law provides additional formula weighting for English language learner (Title III) students. These supplemental weighting provisions apply to both non-charter and charter public schools.

(F)(2)(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.

Because charter schools in Iowa are contracted and established with public school districts—and operate as public schools—they have the same benefits available under the law as non-charter schools when it comes to financing school facilities and infrastructure needs.

(F)(2)(iv) A description of the State’s applicable statutes, regulations, or other relevant legal documents.

The following is a summary of the sections of the Iowa Code pertaining to funding for charter school facilities in the State (see attachment (F)(2)–1):

- **256F.1(1):** Charter schools shall be part of the State’s program of public education.
- **256F.4(2)(c):** [A charter school shall be] free of tuition and application fees to Iowa resident students between the ages of five and 21 years.
- **256F.4(2)(e):** Provide special education services in accordance with Chapter 256B.
- **256F.4(2)(g):** Be subject to and comply with Chapter 284 relating to the student achievement and teacher quality program. A charter school that complies with Chapter 284 shall receive state moneys or be eligible to receive state moneys as provided in Chapter 284 as if it did not operate under a charter.
- **256F.4(2)(i):** Be subject to and comply with the provisions of Chapter 285 relating to the transportation of students.
- **S56F.4(7):** A charter school shall be considered a part of the school district in which it is located for purposes of state school foundation aid pursuant to Chapter 257.
- **256F.4(8):** A charter school may enter into contracts in accordance with Chapter 26.
- **256F.5(7):** The financial plan for the operation of the school including, at a minimum, a listing of the support services the school district will provide, and the charter school’s revenues, budgets, and expenditures.
- **256F.5(11):** The provision of school facilities.

(F)(2)(iv) A description of the statewide facilities supports provided to charter schools, if any.

Because charter schools in Iowa are part of the public LEA, there is no difference in the statewide facilities support provided to charter schools than to other public schools. While facilities are primarily funded by revenue generated at the local level, Iowa does provide statewide funding options that LEAs can utilize to fund school facility-related projects, including their charter school facilities. Three primary examples include local option sales tax, physical plant and equipment levy, and public education and recreation levy.

Local Option Sales Tax

In 2008, the Iowa legislature enacted a statewide one cent sales tax to replace a local option tax that had been enacted in all 99 Iowa counties over the previous decade. The proceeds from the statewide sales tax are used for a combination of school infrastructure funding and property tax relief (Hour File 2663).

Physical Plant and Equipment Levy

Iowa provides LEAs with the ability to annually certify a regular Physical Plant and Equipment Levy (PPEL). Revenues from PPEL may be used for purchase and improvement of grounds; construction and demolition; payment of debt principal related to construction; acquisition of a single unit of equipment or technology exceeding \$500 in value per unit; remodeling or repair of facilities; energy conservation; facility rental; acquisition of facilities, transportation equipment, or recreation equipment; and payment of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) obligations (IC 298.2.).

Public Education and Recreation Levy

The voters in each LEA may approve a Public Education and Recreation Levy (PERL), which continues to be authorized until voters rescind. Revenues from the PERL are used to establish and maintain public recreation places and playgrounds in the public school buildings and grounds of the district. PERL revenues are also used to provide public educational and recreational activities within the district and for community education (IC 300 and IC 276).

(F)(2)(v) The State enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools (as defined in this notice) other than charter schools.

In order to provide students and their families with choices and options to access the best possible education, the State provides LEAs and their schools with the opportunity and flexibility to introduce innovative efforts to meet their needs and improve their outcomes.

Innovative schools across Iowa are diverse and includes: magnet schools; Montessori, International Baccalaureate, advance, career and alternative programs; block schedules; extended school-day; year-round scheduling; and project-based learning. Iowa law allows for

LEAs and schools to seek exemptions from State requirements in order to implement innovative and autonomous efforts to meet their educational needs. While a rigorous review is conducted of each request, more than 1,000 exemptions have been granted since 2001.

In addition, Iowa’s open enrollment law provides families with choice in selecting schools that best serve their needs and provides accessibility to innovative schools across the state.(F)(2)(v) A description of how the State enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools other than charter schools.

In Iowa, a school or school district may seek State approval for an exemption from the general accreditation requirements. As part of the approval process, a school or school district must submit the following information in support of their request:

- The standard or standards for which the exemption is requested.
- A rationale for each exemption requested, in particular how the approval of the request will assist the school or school district to improve student achievement or performance as described in its comprehensive school improvement plan.
- The sources of supportive research evidence and information, when appropriate, that were analyzed and used to form the basis of each submitted rationale.
- How the school or school district staff collaborated with the local community or with the school improvement advisory committee about the need for the exemption request.
- Evidence that the school board approved the exemption request.
- A list of the indicators that will be measured to determine success.
- How the school or school district will measure the success of the standards exemption plan on improving student achievement or performance.

(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.

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