

Community School Sponsor Application

The sponsor application process is designed to determine an applicant's eligibility to sponsor community schools in Ohio, its commitment to develop a portfolio of high-quality community schools, and its capacity to monitor, oversee and provide technical assistance to those schools. Applicants will be evaluated based on their past and future projections for success in meeting statutory obligations as defined by [Ohio Revised Code \(ORC\) Chapter 3314](#) and [Ohio Administrative Code \(OAC\) 3301-102-03](#).

A successful applicant will demonstrate and provide evidence of:

- Meeting all eligibility requirements;
- A record of financial stability;
- The ability to comply with all laws and rules applicable to an Ohio community school sponsor;
- The ability to ensure the schools they sponsor are fully compliant with all laws and rules;
- The organization's staff possesses the requisite skills, professional knowledge, and expertise to provide required oversight and technical assistance;
- The ability to understand and adhere to quality sponsor practices and standards;
- Submitting a completed application with supporting documentation.

The application for community school sponsoring includes the following sections:

- A. Application Cover Sheet
- B. Sponsoring Capacity
- C. Performance of Sponsored and/or Operated Schools (If applicable)
- D. Oversight, Technical Assistance and Compliance
- E. Applicant Assurances

Sponsor Eligibility

To be eligible to sponsor community schools in Ohio, applicants must be one of the following organizations:

- a) The board of education of the district in which the school is proposed to be located;
- b) The board of education of any joint vocational school district with territory in the county in which is located the majority of the territory of the district in which the school is proposed to be located;
- c) The board of education of any other city, local, or exempted village school district having territory in the same county where the district in which the school is proposed to be located has the major portion of its territory;
- d) The governing board of any educational service center, as long as the proposed school will be located in a county within the territory of the educational service center or in a county contiguous to such county;
- e) The board of trustees of any of the 13 state universities listed in [ORC 3345.011](#) [University of Akron, Bowling Green State University, Central State University, University of Cincinnati,

Cleveland State University, Kent State University, Miami University, Ohio University, the Ohio State University, Shawnee State University, University of Toledo, Wright State University, and Youngstown State University] or a sponsoring authority designated by any such board of trustees, as long as a contractually specified mission of the proposed community school will be the practical demonstration of teaching methods, educational technology, or other teaching practices that are included in the university's teacher preparation program approved by the state board;

- f) Any qualified tax-exempt applicant under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, 26 U.S.C. 501(c)(3) if all the following conditions are satisfied:
- i. The applicant has been in operation for at least five years prior to the application date;
 - ii. The applicant has net assets of at least \$500,000 that are owned by the applicant and verifiable by an audited financial statement provided by a certified public accountant and has demonstrated a record of financial responsibility;
 - iii. The Department of Education and Workforce has determined that the applicant is an education-oriented entity.

Education-Oriented Entity

Per [OAC 3301-102-02 \(I\)\(6\)\(c\)](#), an “education-oriented entity” for purposes of serving as a community school sponsor:

- *Has been granted a tax-exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. (Note: An applicant may meet the requirement regarding its status as a tax-exempt entity by successfully demonstrating that it falls under a parent organization that has obtained tax-exempt status under section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code for itself and its affiliated entities; however, all other eligibility criteria in [OAC 3301-102](#) must be met by the applicant itself and not the parent organization.)*
- Is able to demonstrate that it has successfully implemented education programs. Applicants will provide outcome data related to goals for the educational program, progress measures, financial measures as well as other indicators of value of the program.

The determination of whether the applicant is an educationally oriented organization will be based upon the following criteria:

- Applicant's mission, organizational goals and strategic plan;
- Activities that the applicant routinely engages in and/or that routinely take place during a typical business day;
- Applicant's record of successfully implementing educational programs and supported by outcome data that align to the goals of the program. Evidence may include process, financial and academic measures, along with progress monitoring measures and timelines. The applicant is not a community school.

Note: The Department’s determination as to whether an organization is educationally oriented is final.

Application Timeline and Process

Only complete applications that address all required items will be reviewed by the Department.

Applicants must complete all sections of the application and provide all requested supporting documentation. A cross-agency team of Department staff members will review and score all completed applications. The Department will notify applicants of the result of the review process.

If you have questions about the application or this process, please contact the Office of Community Schools at Community.Schools@education.ohio.gov to schedule a meeting. **Sponsor applications must be submitted during the application submission period. Applications submitted after December 31, will not be considered.**

Once the application is approved, it may take up to four months to complete the process and execute a contract between the newly approved sponsor and the Department. Once a contract is executed between the Sponsor and the Department, the organization may begin sponsorship duties pursuant to the stipulations of the sponsorship agreement.

Community School Sponsor Application Timeline

Stage	Actions	Time
Application Submission	The applicant submits a sponsor application by 11:59 pm EST December 31 by uploading it into Epicenter using its Epicenter account. (Contact the Office of Community Schools approximately three weeks before submitting the application to arrange for access to Epicenter.)	Due December 31
Eligibility Review	The Office of Community Schools reviews the eligibility requirements for each sponsor applicant to ensure the applicant is eligible to become a sponsor. Applicant will be notified if the Department has determined that they are ineligible to become a sponsor.	Typically completed within 45 days of receipt of application
Application Review	The Office of Community Schools reviews the sponsor application. The Department may request additional documentation during the review period.	
Applicant Interview	Applicants who are determined to be eligible to be a community school sponsor and complete all sections of the application will be interviewed by the Office of Community Schools.	Interviews scheduled during January and February
Department Approval/Denial	The Office of Community Schools notifies the applicant by letter whether the application is approved or denied no later than March 31.	Notification by March 31
Denied Applicants	Applicants denied sponsorship may appeal the decision in accordance with ORC 119.12.	Applicants have 15 days after the postmark on the denial letter to file an appeal

Approved Applicants	<p>If the applicant is approved, the Department will provide the newly approved sponsor a copy of the sponsorship agreement.</p> <p>*Once the sponsorship agreement is finalized, the contract is signed by both the sponsor and the Department.</p>	Typically, within 30 business days after approval
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Application Scoring

Section A is not scored but will be used to determine whether the applicant is eligible to apply for sponsorship. Once an applicant is determined to meet eligibility requirements, the Department will score the remaining application sections. Scores from the written application will determine whether the applicant is approved for sponsorship.

If the Department determines the applicant does not meet the eligibility requirements, the Department will provide written notification. Additionally, if the applicant fails to provide all required documentation, including a response to each question on the application, the application will not be scored, and the Department will send the applicant a letter of denial. Applicants denied sponsorship may appeal the decision in accordance with ORC 119.12.

Application Approval/Denial and Sponsorship Agreements

Approved applicants will receive notification regarding approval to enter into a sponsorship agreement with the Department. Denied applicants will receive a letter of denial regarding the areas of deficiency. Denied applicants may appeal the denial of sponsorship in accordance with ORC 119.12.

The sponsorship agreement will specify the conditions under which the applicant can serve as a sponsor and include information regarding the number of community schools the applicant is permitted to sponsor. It also will specify the expiration date of the agreement. The Department may include territory parameters in the sponsorship agreement. The applicant must agree to abide by all terms of the sponsorship agreement.

Please note that sponsors planning to sponsor community schools in the Cleveland Municipal School District must request a recommendation from the Cleveland Transformation Alliance.

Application Formatting and Submission Instructions

- The application must be completed on white, 8.5” x 11” paper. Applicants must use a font size of 11 or 12 points for all responses.
- Applicants must include their organization name and the page number in the upper or lower right corner of each page of the application, including all supporting documentation.
- If the applicant has a separate file for each section, the file name should mimic the following naming convention (Applicantsname.Section#)
- Documents and files will only be accepted in the following formats (pdf, word, docx, xlsx) NO ZIP FILES.

Completed application responses must maintain the sequence of information as it is exhibited on the sponsor application form:

- A. Application Cover Sheet
- B. Sponsoring Capability
- C. Performance of Sponsored and/or Operated School(s)
- D. Oversight, Technical Assistance and Compliance
- E. Applicant Assurances

Each supporting document should clearly indicate the section to which it pertains and a file name that references the content (seeing naming conventions and file requirements above). Only one copy of each document (for example, “B - Mission Statement,” “Section B - Budget,”) is needed. In cases in which the same supporting document is needed for multiple sections and questions, applicants should indicate this on the front page of that document (for example, “For C, Question 15 and D, Question 23”).

Applicants are required to submit their applications and supporting documentation electronically to the Office of Community Schools through Epicenter, an online data collection system. Applicants must contact the Office of Community Schools at (877) 644-6338 or community.schools@education.ohio.gov at least three weeks prior to submitting their application for information on how to set up their Epicenter account. The Office of Community Schools will provide each applicant with information on how to set up an Epicenter account and how to use Epicenter.

For electronic files, applicants must use the following naming conventions:

- If the applicant has one file that includes all information (such as responses to all questions and supporting documentation), the file name should include the organization’s name followed by the words “Sponsor Application” The following is an example:
 - Porter Institute-Sponsor Application.

Completing the Community School Sponsor Application

Applicants must complete all sections and questions included in the application. If there is a question that does not apply to the applicant, the applicant may enter “NA” or “Not Applicable” in response. Any questions left blank with no response will receive a score of zero.

Applicants can either enter their question responses in the fillable fields provided for each question or enter their responses on other paper, making sure the response for each question is clearly indicated. Responses on which the font is too small, or the entire response is not visible will receive a lower score. Supporting documents should clearly indicate the documentation type (organization chart, budget, etc.) and the question(s) to which they are attached (for example, “For Section B, Question 18”).

After completing all applicable sections of the application, the applicant must complete Section E—Applicant Assurances. The applicant should then review the application to make sure all questions have been answered and compile all the supporting documents. The applicant should refer to the Application Checklist that follows the application below. Once the applicant has all the required

application materials, the applicant must log in to Epicenter and upload the application under the designated submission type. The application and all supporting materials must be uploaded into Epicenter by the designated deadline.

A. Application Cover Sheet

Organization Name
Contact Information Name: Phone: Email:
Primary Contact Name: Phone: Email:
Has the applicant ever sponsored or operated a community (charter) school? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> [Note: If “Yes,” please provide the school’s name(s) and documented evidence of the performance of those schools (currently or previously sponsored) and the sponsoring duties carried out for those schools.]

Organization Type (check appropriate box): <input type="checkbox"/> State University (as listed in ORC 3345.011): University of Akron, Bowling Green State University, Central State University, University of Cincinnati, Cleveland State University, Kent State University, Miami University, Ohio University, The Ohio State University, Shawnee State University, University of Toledo, Wright State University and Youngstown State University. <i>[Note: Per ORC 3314.02(C)(1)(e), a state university interested in serving as a sponsor can do so if the mission of the proposed school will be the practical demonstration of teaching methods, educational technology, or other teaching practices that are included in the curriculum of the university's teacher preparation program approved by the State Board of Education.]</i> <input type="checkbox"/> School District Board of Education <input type="checkbox"/> Joint Vocational School District Board of Education <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Service Center Governing Board
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Federal Nonprofit [501(c)(3)] Organization – Has a federal nonprofit designation and will be determined by the Department to be an education-oriented entity. This includes any institution of higher education not designated as a “state university.”

[Note: For federal nonprofit organizations, the Department will conduct an eligibility review to confirm the organization meets the criteria for an education-oriented entity, has been in operation for at least five years prior to the application date and has at least \$500,000 in net assets prior to a full review of the sponsor application.]

Note: Applicants can either enter their responses to the questions in Sections B through E in the fields provided below or provide the responses on paper, making sure that each question is clearly indicated. Response font size must be 11 or 12.

B. Sponsoring Capacity

The applicant must demonstrate that it is an eligible entity and capable of sponsoring new start-up or existing school(s).

1. Please explain how being a sponsor would align with or support your organization’s existing mission, vision, core values and strategic plan.
2. Please describe in detail the changes you would anticipate making to your organization’s mission, vision, and strategic plan to address sponsorship if your organization is approved.
3. How does your organization evaluate its work and make improvements if needed? Please explain how the process would align to and strengthen sponsoring activities.
4. Please describe the current role of your organization’s governing authority (e.g., board of directors, board of trustees) and any adaptations that would be made if becoming a community school sponsor. Please describe and provide evidence of any actions or activities undertaken by your governing authority.
5. Please describe your organization’s sponsoring priorities and how they were determined.
6. What types of community schools do you plan to sponsor? Please describe your decision-making process.
7. How will you determine where your sponsored schools will be located? Please describe your decision-making process.
8. Compare and contrast the role of a sponsor, governing authority and school leadership of a community (charter) school. Please include specific examples
9. Does your organization have a conflict of interest policy? As a sponsor, what policies and practices will your organization implement to avoid potential conflicts of interest? (Please attach policy if available.)
10. Please provide a current organizational chart and/or a proposed organizational chart that indicates which staff positions would be involved with carrying out sponsoring responsibilities.
11. Please describe the knowledge, experience and expertise your organization’s staff members have with community schools and sponsoring of community schools. If your current staff does not have knowledge, experience and expertise, please describe how you plan to carry out sponsoring

duties. (Please attach staff a resume or bio for each staff member as well as position descriptions.)

12. Please describe how your organization will support the ongoing development of employees in your organization regarding education, community schools' trends, and the responsibilities of a sponsor.
13. Please describe your process and implementation timeline for becoming a sponsor. Include activities and desired outcomes.
14. Please provide a five-year financial plan for your organization. Within the plan, please include and identify all projected revenues, and expenditures for sponsoring activities including oversight/ensuring compliance, technical assistance, school improvement support, professional learning, and operational costs. The plan should include assumptions on which projections are based
15. Ohio sponsors must meet quality practices based on the standards established by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers. (Ohio's standards for quality practices are available [here](#).) Based on your understanding of these standards, please describe how your organization will ensure adherence to quality practices and standards.

Please include copies of the following documents:

- Mission statement
- Vision Statement
- Strategic Plan
- Most recent Annual Report
- Two most recent year's financial statements
- Most recent independent audit
- Articles of Incorporation
- Governing authority bylaws
- Organizational chart
- Staff resumes and job descriptions
- Five-year financial plan

C. Performance of Sponsored and/or Operated School(s) If Applicable

If the applicant has or currently sponsors or operates schools in another state, it must demonstrate that at least one of its sponsored or operated schools has a rating that is comparable to or better than the performance of Ohio schools rated in continuous improvement or its successor equivalent rating (three stars) under ORC 3302.03. If your organization does not sponsor or operate schools, please answer NA to each of the questions in Section C.

16. Does your organization currently sponsor (authorize) schools in another state? If yes, please provide the name, address and most recent performance rating of each school. Also provide information and link to how the performance ratings are calculated in other states.

17. Does your organization currently operate (manage) a school(s) in another state? If yes, please provide the name, address and most recent performance rating of each school. Also provide information and a link to how the performance ratings are calculated.
18. If your organization currently sponsors or operates schools in other states, please discuss how the current performance ratings of those schools compare to Ohio schools rated as meeting standards (earning a rating of three stars or better).
19. Please provide a copy of your organization's community (charter) school application if you sponsor schools in another state. Please specify the general criteria considered when authorizing a new community (charter) school and replicating an existing model.
20. If your organization operates (manages) a school in another state, please provide a copy of the management contract.
21. Please describe how your organization ensures that all sponsorship decisions are transparent and based upon merit.
22. Please describe the process and the frequency for reviewing school performance against measures included in the sponsorship contract.

Please include copies of the following documents:

- Nonprofit IRS determination
- Evidence of at least five years of operation
- Evidence of net assets of at least \$500,000
- Most recent IRS Form 990
- Evidence of successful implementation of educational programs
- Accountability reports for schools sponsored or operated in another state
- Information regarding how accountability ratings are calculated
- Sponsorship application
- Application timeline
- Guidance documents and policies
- Application review rubric
- Contract template
- Performance standards/framework
- Site visit report example

D. Oversight, Technical Assistance and Compliance

The applicant must demonstrate that it possesses the requisite skills, professional knowledge and expertise to provide technical assistance and monitor, oversee and hold accountable for compliance with all applicable laws, rules and terms of the community school contract for each community school that it proposes to sponsor.

23. Please describe your organization's plan for reviewing applications from proposed and existing schools. What is the level of expertise of your anticipated application review team? How does your review process address evaluating the education plan, governance, finance and accountability?
24. Please describe the level of skill, professional knowledge and expertise of your anticipated staff, including employees and contracted staff.

25. Please describe the type(s) of technical assistance that your organization expects to provide to its schools. How will your organization determine the types of technical assistance needed?
26. Please describe your organization’s plan for monitoring your organization’s compliance with all applicable laws and rules, as well as monitoring your schools’ compliance with all applicable laws and rules. Please include an example.
27. Please describe how your organization will ensure that its evaluation of schools is based on standards established in the sponsor-school agreement and are transparent and clearly communicated to schools.
28. Describe the circumstances that would lead your organization to intervene in a school’s operations. Also explain what process and procedures will be followed should this be necessary.

E. Applicant Assurances

By signing this form, _____ acknowledges that they are aware of sponsor responsibilities and shall comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws, rules, regulations should the organization be approved to sponsor community schools in Ohio. We hereby assure and agree to comply with all conditions of the approved application and submit required documents and certifications as required should the organization be approved as a sponsor.

NAME OF ORGANIZATION

IDENTIFIED OFFICIAL WITH AUTHORITY

Printed Name and Title _____

Signature _____ Date _____
(person with authority to sign documents on behalf of the organization)

ORGANIZATION’S PRIMARY CONTACT FOR THIS APPLICATION (IF DIFFERENT FROM ABOVE)

Printed Name and Title _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Section	Total Possible Points
Sponsoring Capacity	60 points
Performance of Sponsored or Operated Schools (if applicable)	35 points
Oversight, Technical Assistance	30 points
Interview	20 points

Applicants must earn 75% of the total available (and applicable) points to be approved as a community school sponsor.