Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Authorizer Annual Report

Enter responses where prompted. Enter an "x" in underlined space before "Yes" or "No" responses. Only provide information for one school in each table row. Add additional rows to tables, as needed.

Authorizer Information

Name of Authorizing Organization: Novation Education Opportunities (NEO)

Mailing Address: 3432 Denmark Ave #130 Eagan, MN 55123

Name and Title of Primary Authorizer Contact: Wendy Swanson Choi, Executive Director

Telephone of Primary Authorizer Contact: 612-889-2103

Email Address of Primary Authorizer Contact: executive.director.neo@gmail.com

Authorizing Mission: NEO's mission is to authorize and oversee charter schools through consistent, ongoing, and robust evaluation to achieve significant and measurable student growth. NEO's vision is to be a leading authorizer of innovative, diverse, and effective charter schools.

Authorizer Summary: In 2009, Minnesota passed revised charter school law effectively holding charter school authorizers to higher standards in overseeing the charter school performance in the areas of student achievement, governance, operations, and finance. Due to the revised charter school law, essentially all the 52 prior authorizers which included districts, colleges/universities, and large non-profit organizations, had to be reapproved by the state if they intended to continue to serve as an authorizer. In addition, the revised law called for a new category of authorizers, 'single purpose authorizers', whose sole mission is chartering schools to achieve the primary purpose of improving all student pupil learning and all student achievement.

At that time, primarily due to capacity issues, many authorizers did not resubmit their application, and some were denied. NEO was one of the first single-purpose authorizers approved and received approval to authorize 12 schools that transferred from authorizers that no longer continued. NEO has since grown to serve as the authorizer of 29 charter schools - 26 operational and 3 pre-operational in the 2024-2025 school year. In addition, NEO approved a school that is still in the process of receiving a charter number.

NEO is governed by a Board of Directors which makes the final decision to approve or reject charter school applications in consideration of the recommendations of the NEO Advisors (contracted experts) and the NEO Executive Director.

The Board of Directors also makes final decisions regarding charter contract renewals, terminations, and expansions, supervises and evaluates the Executive Director, and carries out all duties of a nonprofit governing board.

As a volunteer body, the NEO Board of Directors is assisted by the NEO Advisors and the NEO Staff including the Executive Director who serves as the main charter school liaison. The NEO Advisors are independent contractors who have experience, skills, and expertise in charter school oversight, monitoring, and evaluation.

The NEO Advisors evaluate new school and expansion applications, conduct board meeting observations to assist with oversight, conduct site visits to verify compliance, provide authorized schools with technical assistance with compliance, facilitate sharing of effective practices and resources through learning walks at the schools, and conduct fact finding in response to complaints.

The primary purpose of mission-driven charter schools is to improve the learning, achievement, and success of all students. The additional purposes of charter schools are to:

(1) increase quality learning opportunities for all students;
(2) encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
(3) measure learning outcomes and create different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes;
(4) establish new forms of accountability for schools; or
(5) create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.

NEO and the schools that NEO authorize directly improve the learning, achievement, and success of all students through regular progress monitoring, high-quality feedback, and sharing of resources.

We increase quality learning opportunities for all students by providing innovative and diverse education programming to meet diverse student needs. For example, schools that NEO authorizes provide language immersion and classes in primary home languages, Montessori programming, individualized learning, science immersion, and classical education.

We encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods, measure learning outcomes and create different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes and establish new forms of accountability for schools by developing customized performance frameworks that we use to monitor and evaluate school performance. The performance frameworks incorporate innovative forms of measuring outcomes, making it possible to progress monitor and evaluate the diverse programming that the schools provide.

This past year, Minnesota public schools continued to face a sector-wide shortage of qualified personnel, including teachers, financial service providers such as auditors, and transportation providers as well as increased regulations. Together, these pressures placed significant strain on the Minnesota public education system and made it more challenging to fulfill the primary and additional purposes of chartering.

At the same time, many students—particularly those who lacked equitable access to learning supports at home and were required to rely on distance learning during the pandemic—continued to make progress toward academic recovery. Additionally, schools statewide have experienced a significant increase in student need for mental health services.

As a result, authorizers including NEO, school leaders, board members, and service providers have strengthened collaboration through increased communication, oversight, monitoring, technical assistance, and the sharing of information and resources.

In response to these challenges this past year, NEO:

1. Maintained a charter board member training and development site to improve accessibility and effectiveness of training resources and oversight of completion of training. We continue to develop an accessible board member training site, www.mncharterboard.com, to provide board members and school leaders with a free training resource and to facilitate sharing of resources.

2. Clarified, aligned, prioritized, and increased technical support and resources to charter schools.

3. Continued to improve the measurement of school performance beyond state standardized measures to measure, monitor, and evaluate progress in performance areas that Minnesota does not measure.

4. Continued outreach to community leaders who most effectively engage and communicate with communities that have historically lacked equitable access to education options that meet their needs. This outreach focuses on partnering with these leaders to identify and understand student needs to develop high-quality charter schools designed to address those needs. By working collaboratively to prevent students from falling through the cracks of the education system, we make an important contribution to the future of Minnesota.

5. Worked cross-sector to strengthen “early warning” performance dashboards. We collaborated with the charter schools we authorize and with sector partners to refine dashboards that provide timely status updates and advance indicators, further supporting proactive monitoring and continuous improvement of charter school performance.

In addition, to meet the responsibilities of an authorizer, NEO regularly:

(1) reviews applications for new schools, determines whether a new school is ready to open, reviews applications for grade and site expansions, reviews applications for change in authorizers, and determines whether to approve or deny an application based on approved criteria.

(2) negotiates and executes the performance charter contracts with the schools it authorizes, including verifying compliance with contract terms;

(3) conducts ongoing oversight and monitoring of the school's academic, operational, and financial performance during the term of the charter contract using a school-customized Performance Framework dashboard;

(4) evaluates the academic, operational, and financial performance of chartered schools as defined in the charter contract prior to the end of the contract to determine the renewal, nonrenewal, or termination of the contract using a school-customized Performance Framework; and

(5) complies with authorizer requirements in Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 124E, which govern charter schools and authorizers and monitors NEO organizational performance using a Touchpoint Dashboard.

Authorizer Processes

New Charter School Applications in FY 2025 (B.1)

Did your organization review any new charter school applications?

__X__ Yes

___ No

If no, please provide an explanation:

N/A

If yes, complete the table below for each application.

Name of Charter School Applicant	Authorizer Approval or Disapproval	Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Approval or Disapproval	If Disapproved, Reason(s) for Disapproval	Application Withdrawn by Applicant
Enter name of charter school applicant	Enter: Approval, Disapproval, or N/A	Enter: Approval, Disapproval, or N/A	Enter reason(s) for disapproval or N/A	Enter: Yes, No, or N/A
Creative Minds Academy	Disapproval	N/A	Application did not meet satisfactory criteria for approval	N/A
Future Tech IT Academy	Disapproval	N/A	Application did not meet satisfactory criteria for approval	N/A

New Charter School Openings in FY 2025 (B.2)

Did your organization engage in ready-to-open activities?

___X Yes

___No

If no, please provide an explanation:

N/A

If yes, complete the table below for each charter school scheduled to open.

Name of Charter School Projected to Begin Serving Students in FY 2025	Projected Opening Date	Did this School Open as Planned?	If No, Provide Reason(s) and Revised Projected Opening Date
Enter name of charter school projected to begin serving students	Enter date in MM/DD/YYYY format	Enter: Yes, No, or N/A	Enter reason(s) for not opening as planned, and revised projected opening date in MM/DD/YYYY format
Delta Academy of Technology & Innovation (formerly Irrawaddy Academy)	09/03/2024	No	Did not receive CSP Grant funds and chose to delay, Projected opening date was September 3, 2024. However, Delta Academy did successfully open on September 2, 2025.
Enlighten Academy Charter School (in process of name change to Horizon Science Academy – St. Paul)	09/03/2024	No	Could not secure facility in the location of the community to be served. Projected opening date was September 3, 2024
Ocean of Wisdom Charter School	09/03/2024	No	Did not receive CSP Grant funds and chose to delay, Projected opening date was September 3, 2024.

Name of Charter School Projected to Begin Serving Students in FY 2025	Projected Opening Date	Did this School Open as Planned?	If No, Provide Reason(s) and Revised Projected Opening Date
Freedom Academy of Leadership and Arts	09/03/2024	No	In process of receiving charter number. Projected opening date was September 3, 2024.

Charter School Expansion Applications (to add primary enrollment sites or grades, including instructional prekindergarten or preschool programs) in FY 2025 (B.2)

Did your organization review any site and/or grade expansion applications (including instructional prekindergarten or preschool programs)?

____Yes

___X_No

If no, please provide an explanation:

No authorized school submitted a request.

If yes, complete the table below for each application.

Name of Charter School	Proposed Additional Grades to be Served (including prekindergarten and/or preschool) and/or Location of New Site	Authorizer Approval or Disapproval	MDE Approval or Disapproval	If Disapproved, Reason(s) for Disapproval	Application Withdrawn by Applicant
Enter name of charter school	Enter proposed additional grades and/or location of new site	Enter: Approval, Disapproval, or N/A	Enter: Approval, Disapproval, or N/A	Enter reason(s) for disapproval or N/A	Enter: Yes, No, or N/A

Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening Requests in FY 2025 (B.2)

Did your organization review any requests for official early childhood health and developmental screening program recognition?

___Yes

_X_No

If no, please provide an explanation:

No authorized school submitted a request.

If yes, complete the table below for each request.

Name of Charter School	Authorizer Approval or Disapproval	MDE Approval or Disapproval	If Disapproved, Reason(s) for Disapproval	Application Withdrawn by Applicant
Enter name of charter school	Enter: Approval, Disapproval, or N/A	Enter: Approval, Disapproval, or N/A	Enter reason(s) for disapproval or N/A	Enter: Yes, No, or N/A

Charter School Change in Authorizer Requests in FY 2025 (B.2)

Did your organization review any change in authorizer requests?

____Yes

___X No

If no, please provide an explanation:

No school submitted a change in authorizer request.

If yes, complete the table below for each request.

Name of Charter School	Authorizer Charter School Requested to Transfer From	Authorizer Approval or Disapproval	MDE Approval or Disapproval	If Disapproved, Reason(s) for Disapproval	Application Withdrawn by Applicant
Enter name of charter school	Enter name of authorizer	Enter: Approval, Disapproval, or N/A	Enter: Approval, Disapproval, or N/A	Enter reason(s) for disapproval or N/A	Enter: Yes, No, or N/A

Charter Contract Renewals in FY 2025 (B.9)

Did your organization engage in charter renewal activities in FY 2025?

___X Yes

_____No

If no, please provide an explanation:

N/A

If yes, complete the table below for each school.

Name of Charter School	Was Contract Renewed?	If Yes, Term of Contract Renewal	If No, Reason(s) for Nonrenewal
Enter name of charter school	Enter: Yes, No, or N/A	Enter dates in MM/DD/YYYY-MM/DD/YYYY format	Enter reason(s) for nonrenewal or N/A
Achieve Language Academy	Yes	07/01/2025-06/30/2028	N/A
Agamim Classical Academy	Yes	07/01/2025-06/30/2030	N/A
Great Oaks Academy	Yes	07/01/2025-06/30/2030	N/A
Hmong College Prep Academy	Yes	07/01/2025-06/30/2030	N/A
Innovation Science and Technology Academy	Yes	07/01/2025-06/30/2028	N/A
Kato Public Charter School	No		Did not achieve at least a Satisfactory Rating as measured by Performance Framework indicators to be automatically recommended for renewal and did not provide sufficient supplemental documentation of school performance and progress toward goals.

Name of Charter School	Was Contract Renewed?	If Yes, Term of Contract Renewal	If No, Reason(s) for Nonrenewal
Lionsgate Academy	Yes	07/01/2025-06/30/2030	N/A
Quantum STEAM Academy	Yes	07/01/2025-06/30/2030	N/A

Additional Authorizer Activities

Authorizer Organizational Goals (A.2)

Describe the progress your organization made on its organizational goals related to authorizing in FY 2025.

The goals of NEO align to the primary purpose of mission-driven charter schools to improve the learning, achievement, and success of all students, and to the additional purposes of increasing quality learning opportunities for all students, encouraging the use of different and innovative teaching methods, measuring learning outcomes and creating different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes, establishing new forms of accountability for schools, and creating new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.

Overview of NEO's 5-Yr Strategic Plan and Organization Goals

NEO monitored and evaluated progress toward three main organizational goal areas. The first goal area aligned to the primary purpose of charter schools is to support improvement in the percent of students in schools collectively authorized by NEO who meet and exceed grade-level standards in reading, math, and science. The second goal area is to support improvement in growth that the students make in reading and math. The third goal area focuses on improvement in graduation rates.

Goal 1. Improvement in Achievement.

According to the state test data that MDE directly shared with NEO, collectively, the percent of students who scored proficient (meets or exceeds) as measured by state tests (Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments) for schools that NEO authorizes increased from 36% to 37% in reading and increased from 26% to 27% in math. New standards went into effect in science this past year, so results are not comparable for science.

NEO continues to serve a relatively high percentage of immigrant families and their children.

The percent of multilingual students served in English language proficiency programs assessed in schools authorized by NEO was about 36% in 2025 compared to about 10% statewide.

Charter schools that NEO authorizes offer supplemental instruction in many primary home languages to support language development and the preservation of heritage languages including Hmong, Somali, Arabic, Spanish, Karen dialects, and Oromo.

In terms of number of students scoring proficient (meets and exceeds), NEO met the goal that NEO set in 2020 for improvement from 2,472 to at least 3,000 students collectively scoring meets or exceeds in math, reading and science as measured by state assessments by 2025.

In 2025, 3,547 students collectively scored meets or exceeds as measured by state assessments in math, reading and science.

When a growing number of students enroll already performing below proficient levels as is the case for most schools that NEO authorizes, it impacts the overall percentage of students scoring proficient, as the influx of lower-performing students decreases the average achievement level.

However, despite this challenge, the schools that NEO authorizes have continued to outperform others.

3 of the 15 charter schools that were identified in 2025 by the Minnesota Department of Education as “High Quality Charter Schools” for the purpose of initial eligibility for a Charter School Program Replication/Expansion Grant are authorized by NEO.

Goal 2. Improvement in Graduation Rates.

Note that the Minnesota Department of Education graduation rate reporting lags one year.

4-year Graduation Rate

Collectively the high schools had a 4-year graduation rate of 79%, an improvement from the prior year graduation rate of 75%.

5-year Graduation Rate

Collectively the high schools had a 5-year graduation rate of 83%, compared to the prior year graduation rate of 84%.

6-year Graduation Rate

Collectively the high schools had a 6-year graduation rate of 86%, an improvement from the prior year graduation rate of 85%.

7-year Graduation Rate

Collectively the high schools had a 7-year graduation rate of 90%, an improvement from the prior year graduation rate of 87%.

The high schools that NEO authorizes serve a high percentage of students in grades 9-12 who were not successful in a larger traditional school environment and who need to make up credits to be on track to graduate. Therefore, a focus of these schools has been on reengaging students in college and career plans.

The results show that the schools have been graduating a greater percentage of students as the students remain enrolled more than four years and make up the credits needed for graduation. Given an additional year or two beyond the traditional 4-year trajectory, many more students enrolled completed graduation requirements.

NEO had set a goal for the schools collectively authorized to exceed a combined 4, 5, and 6-year graduation rate of at least 75% by 2025. At the time the goal was set, MDE did not report 7-year graduation rates.

In 2023-2024 (the most recent year data is available), the schools collectively authorized by NEO exceeded the goal (based on most current graduation data available) by reaching at least 75% of students graduating in each of the 4, 5, 6, and 7-year graduation cohorts.

Strategies for Meeting Goals

Collectively, the NEO team includes NEO staff, contracted experts (“Advisors’), school leaders, school board members, and students and their families. NEO used several strategies to support school and student success in 2024-2025.

Generally, the work fell into supporting the authorized schools in three categories: 1) starting high quality schools, 2) improving the school performance of operational schools, and 3) expanding effective practices and high-quality programs.

More specifically, NEO worked to 1) prioritize, align, and clarify work and expectations, 2) provide high quality feedback, 3) facilitate sharing of effective practices, and 4) provide technical assistance with compliance through technical assistance sessions, document review-and-comment, board observations, site visits, data meetings, learning walks, and annual meetings of all school leaders and board members.

In addition, NEO continued to leverage technology to coordinate and streamline reporting to improve the rate of on-time and accurate submissions and reduce the amount of time schools must spend on meeting reporting requirements.

Most students who enroll in the schools that NEO authorizes were not experiencing success in their former education settings and many enroll not having passed a state test.

Collectively, the schools that NEO authorizes continue to reach more students each year with quality education choices so that all students can learn in a supportive and responsive learning environment that most effectively meets their needs. In the past 10 years, the schools that NEO authorizes have grown from serving 2,930 students to 9,584 students.

Enrollment Trends: Schools Authorized by NEO

	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	total	change
2014-15	NA	280	297	263	277	258	277	165	192	180	204	181	189	217	2930	
2015-16	NA	330	329	324	284	274	257	212	184	217	198	279	288	513	3689	+26%
2016-17	34	413	423	427	403	337	291	237	238	194	190	197	215	235	3834	+4%
2017-18	94	439	464	425	412	408	348	304	244	250	188	213	196	257	4242	+11%
2018-19	86	463	488	467	450	450	413	363	330	275	229	236	227	259	4739	+12%
2019-20	115	462	508	503	477	430	426	374	347	324	267	250	240	281	5013	+6%
2020-21	108	398	541	527	520	466	437	392	382	361	251	272	252	286	5196	+4%
2021-22	112	520	581	564	569	543	502	431	409	375	253	251	275	328	5713	+10%
2022-23	112	716	789	750	772	748	743	654	659	632	501	456	430	503	8465	+48%
2023-24	151	698	821	857	816	780	770	691	647	626	497	476	464	494	8788	+4%
2024-25	168	812	859	863	897	832	879	830	845	782	427	478	438	474	9584	+9%

Data Source: Minnesota Department of Education Data and Analytics

Authorizer Structure of Operations (A.3)

Describe changes, if any, to your organization's structure of operations related to authorizing in FY 2025 (for example, organizational changes, new positions, updated full-time equivalencies of authorizing positions, etc.).

NEO did not have any changes to the authorizer structure of operations.

NEO continued to maintain a ratio of at least 1 Full-time Equivalency (FTE) authorizing position to 7 authorized schools through a combination of staffing and contracting with independent contractors with expertise and experience as needed.

The Executive Director of NEO possesses day-to-day management responsibilities, and the NEO Board of Directors makes final new school, readiness to open, expansion, and contract renewal, termination, and amendment/revision decisions based on results of evaluations/analyses, and recommendations from the Executive Director.

The Executive Director reports to the NEO Board of Directors and manages the implementation of the strategies and progress monitoring, as well as implementation of the board-approved budget.

The Executive Director oversees the NEO Advisors, leveraging their experience and expertise in academics, operations, governance, and finance to ensure that NEO effectively and efficiently starts, oversees, monitors, and evaluates schools authorized by NEO as well as provides technical assistance with compliance as needed and facilitates sharing of effective practices.

The NEO Advisors are independent contractors that NEO engages as necessary for specific contracted work for their skills and expertise in support of NEO's mission and vision and organizational goals.

The specific work for which NEO contracted with NEO Advisors included 1) desktop review and evaluation of new, contract renewal, and expansion applications, 2) financial monitoring and evaluation reports, 3) conducting annual site visits as part of evaluation of compliance, 4) conducting fact finding and investigations in response to complaints, 5) facilitating sharing of effective school practices, and 6) providing technical assistance with compliance.

NEO contracted with 10 Advisors and employed 3 full-time staff to conduct the work of authorizing 29 operational and pre-operational charter schools, and one in process of receiving a charter. In doing so, NEO maintained a ratio of 1 FTE to 6 authorized charter schools. To achieve the organizational goals, NEO will continue to maintain at least 1 FTE per no more than 7 schools authorized.

Should an authorized school transfer or closed, NEO has the fund balance and flexibility to adjust work with independent contractors to maintain the ratio of 1FTE to 7 authorized schools.

Authorizing Staff Expertise (A.4)

Briefly describe the background and experience, in the areas of charter school academics, finance, operations, and law, of any authorizing staff, committee members, board members, consultants, etc. new to your organization in FY 2025.

NA: NEO retained all staff, board members, and consultants.

Knowledge and Skill Development of Authorizing Leadership and Staff (A.5)

Describe how your organization built the knowledge and skill base of its authorizing leadership and staff through professional development over the past year.

A. NEO staff actively participated in the Minnesota Association of Charter School Authorizers (MACSA) as a member, and NEO served as a board member and served on the MACSA Effective Practices Committee to facilitate sharing of practices. NEO gained information, resources and ideas through planning and creating materials for, and engaging in, the Effective Practices Committee sessions.

1. Effective Practices Committee In-Person Authorizer Professional Development Session (9/6/2024)
   a. Authorizer Standards & Oversight Practice
      - Application of MACSA Principles & Standards
      - Authorizer self-assessment across academics, finance, governance, and culture
   b. Student Attendance & Engagement Accountability
      - Use of North Star accountability data
      - Consistent attendance as an equity and engagement indicator
   c. Equity-Centered Authorizing Practice
      - Reflection on personal identity and lived experience
      - Understanding how identity influences authorizing decisions
   d. Strategic Plan Monitoring
      - Tracking progress toward MACSA strategic goals

2. Effective Practices Committee In-Person Authorizer Professional Development Session (11/1/2024)
   a. School-Level Effective Practices
      - Site-based learning from a high-performing charter school
      - Attendance improvement strategies
   b. Communications & Stakeholder Engagement
      - Launch of coordinated communications support
      - Public trust, messaging, and collaboration among authorizers
   c. Legislative & Policy Context
      - Legislative proposals and fiscal stress in the charter sector
      - Implications of school closure and deficit scenarios
   d. Equity, Bias, and Antiracist Authorizing
      - Identifying and disrupting bias in authorizing decisions
      - Use of equity decision-making tools and frameworks

3. Effective Practices Committee In-Person Authorizer Professional Development Session (2/7/2025)
   a. Federal Policy & Regulatory Impact
      - Executive orders, federal staffing reductions, and compliance risk
      - Implications for civil rights, Title VI, Title IX, and immigration guidance
   b. Authorizer Support & Communication
      - Supporting schools through uncertainty and policy change
      - Communicating proactively with school leaders
   c. Equity Audits & Accountability
      - School-administered equity audits
      - Authorizer role in monitoring equity plans and outcomes
   d. Statewide Leadership & Sector Planning
      - Conference planning and sector-wide professional development
   e. Policy Monitoring & Advocacy
      - State and national policy updates affecting charter schools

4. Effective Practices Committee In-Person Authorizer Professional Development Session (4/4/2025)
    a. Media Relations & Public Narrative
        - Engaging journalists and shaping public perception
        - Proactive vs. reactive media strategies
    b. Legislative Advocacy & Influence
        - Relationship-building with policymakers
        - Testimony, messaging, and legislative engagement skills
    c. Policy Platform Development
        - Review and refinement of MACSA policy priorities
        - Alignment across authorizers and advocacy partners
5. Effective Practices Committee In-Person Authorizer Professional Development Session (6/9/2025)
    a. State Academic Policy Implementation
        - READ Act requirements and authorizer verification responsibilities
    b. Charter Sector Growth & Structural Change
        - New school applications, mergers, and authorizer due diligence
    c. Financial Oversight & Fiscal Health
        - Key financial indicators authorizers must monitor
    d. Licensure & Workforce Compliance
        - Teacher licensure verification and use of PELSB data systems
    e. Legislative & Funding Updates
        - K–12 omnibus legislation and aid formula changes
    f. Language Access & Civil Rights Compliance
        - Authorizer oversight of Language Access Plans
        - Public access, board adoption, and accountability expectations

B. NEO is an active member of MACS and attended the MACS Policy Forum and Annual Meeting September 26, 2024, to help NEO remain current in knowledge related to charter schools and authorizing.

C. NEO staff participated in several MDE trainings and learning opportunities.

1. NEO staff attended the following “MDE Charter School Bootcamps” to obtain information and material that may be necessary for oversight and monitoring of charter schools that it authorizes. Additionally, by attending the bootcamps NEO seeks to gain information to facilitate sharing of information and resources with the schools, provide technical assistance where appropriate, and stay up to date on the various reporting requirements and programs.
    a. 10/9/24
        - Charter Center Resources
        - Extended Time Revenue (ETR)
        - Federal Charter Schools Program (CSP) Grant
        - Next Steps for Charter Schools and Opening a Charter School
        - Avoiding Common Pitfalls: Enrollment, Board Composition, Conflict of Interest
        - Procurement
    b. 10/23/24
        - Leadership Supports and Professional Development
        - Early Education
        - Overview of School Nutrition Programs
        - Meet PELSB
        - Portfolio Licensure 101
    c. 12/18/24
        - Teacher Development and Evaluation
        - Person Centered Thinking in the IEP Process
        - Renewal for Tier 3 and Tier 4 Teachers
        - Indoor Air Quality

d. 1/15/25
   - School Nutrition Program Application Process
   - Teacher Ethics
   - Serving Advanced Learners
   - Board of School Administrators and Administrator Ethics

e. 3/19/25
   - IDEAS State Aid Payments and Reports - The Basics
   - Licensure Compliance
   - Licensure Permissions

f. 6/18/25
   - PELSB Reporting 101
   - Nonexclusionary Discipline

2. NEO staff also attended the following MDE sessions to learn about legislative changes that would affect school policy and compliance and to obtain information and materials that may be necessary for oversight and monitoring of charter schools that it authorizes. By attending these MDE sessions NEO seeks to gain information to facilitate sharing of information and resources with the schools, provide technical assistance where appropriate, and stay up to date on the various reporting requirements and programs.
   a. READ Act Literacy Aid (8/29/2024)
   b. Charter School Program (CSP) Start-Up Grant Application Training - (9/11/2024)
   c. MN Department of Education (MDE) Data Practices and Open Meeting Law Session – (11/15/24)
   d. Statutory Operating Debt (SOD) Guidance with Molly Koppes (12/18/24)
   e. Charter Lease Aid/Pupil Reporting Training (3/27/25)
   f. MN Department of Education (MDE) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS): Training with Delta Tech Academy (4/22/25)
   g. Charter School Program Expansion/Replication Applicant Training (6/16/25)

D. NEO Advisors are independent contractors with whom NEO contracts for expertise in various areas of oversight. NEO conducted the annual orientation and technical assistance session for NEO Advisors on October 10, 2024, to review NEO procedures, policies, and systems for preventing conflicts of interest, evaluating new school and expansion applications, conducting board meeting observations and school site visits, resolving complaints, and reviewing and commenting on key documents, as well as to gain feedback and ideas for continuous improvement from Advisors (independent contractors).

E. On January 14, 2025, NEO conducted a NEO Advisor (contracted experts) training to facilitate interrater-reliability training in preparation for new school application reviews.

F. NEO board, staff and advisors participated in Authorizer Self-Evaluation by reviewing progress toward implementation of key authorized school touchpoints during the year utilizing a "Touchpoint Dashboard" weekly. The NEO board also reviewed the dashboard, the financial status, compliance with NEO's fund balance policy, and adherence to the approved budget at board meetings throughout the year.

G. NEO staff participated in the Minnesota Charter School Leadership Conference June 9-11, 2025, in Bemidji, Minnesota where NEO staff presented and attended sessions.

NEO facilitated an authorizer session on the first day of the conference with the support of Ron Berger, a charter school finance expert, entitled "Numbers Authorizers Need to Know to Improve Financial Oversight".

During the rest of the conference NEO facilitated a session for charter schools with the support of Dr. Diane Restorff, former executive director of Lionsgate Academy, and Carrie Bakken, director of Avalon Charter School entitled, “Creating Different and Innovative Forms of Measuring Outcomes of School Performance”.

NEO also facilitated a session for charter schools with the support of Kelly Wosika from the MN Department of Education and Ron Berger entitled, “Numbers Board Members Need to Know to Mitigate Financial Risk”.

Please document the annual successful completion of training of your organization’s staff members during the previous year relative to chartering and an authorizer’s role and responsibilities. Minn. Stat. 124E.05, subd. 2 (2024). Please include at least the following for each training: the date(s) of the training, the training topic or name, and a brief description of how the training relates to chartering and/or an authorizer’s role and responsibilities. If provided above, please indicate as such.

Note that the following trainings, including many of those previously noted, were department-approved training (either offered or approved by MDE) that NEO staff attended.

Charter School Boot Camps (attended to improve our knowledge base for improving authorizer oversight and evaluation of compliance):

a. 10/9/24
   - Charter Center Resources
   - Extended Time Revenue (ETR)
   - Federal Charter Schools Program (CSP) Grant
   - Next Steps for Charter Schools and Opening a Charter School
   - Avoiding Common Pitfalls: Enrollment, Board Composition, Conflict of Interest
   - Procurement

b. 10/23/24
   - Leadership Supports and Professional Development
   - Early Education
   - Overview of School Nutrition Programs
   - Meet PELSB
   - Portfolio Licensure 101

c. 12/18/24
   - Teacher Development and Evaluation
   - Person Centered Thinking in the IEP Process
   - Renewal for Tier 3 and Tier 4 Teachers
   - Indoor Air Quality

d. 1/15/25
   - School Nutrition Program Application Process
   - Teacher Ethics
   - Serving Advanced Learners
   - Board of School Administrators and Administrator Ethics

e. 3/19/25
   - IDEAS State Aid Payments and Reports - The Basics
   - Licensure Compliance
   - Licensure Permissions

f. 6/18/25
   - PELSB Reporting 101
   - Nonexclusionary Discipline

Additional MDE Sessions:

a. READ Act Literacy Aid (8/29/2024)
b. Charter School Program (CSP) Start-Up Grant Application Training - (9/11/2024)
c. MN Department of Education (MDE) Data Practices and Open Meeting Law Session – (11/15/24)
d. Statutory Operating Debt (SOD) Guidance with Molly Koppes (12/18/24)
e. Charter Lease Aid/Pupil Reporting Training (3/27/25)
f. MN Department of Education (MDE) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS): Training with Delta Tech Academy (4/22/25)
g. Charter School Program Expansion/Replication Applicant Training (6/16/25)

Authorizer Self-Evaluation (A.9)

Describe how your organization self-evaluated its internal ability (capacity, infrastructure, and practices) to oversee the portfolio of charter schools over the past year.

A. NEO board members conducted board meetings throughout the year to review and monitor capacity, infrastructure, processes, and practices including implementation of NEO's Business Plan and the allocation of resources for overseeing the portfolio of charter schools and school performance. For example, the NEO board regularly reviewed, monitored, and approved monthly financials in comparison to the approved annual budget. The NEO board regularly reviewed and monitored progress toward implementation of NEO authorizer strategies for supporting authorized school success via a Touchpoint Dashboard.

B. The NEO board treasurer and contracted financial service provider (EdFin) regularly reviewed and monitored the authorizer fee collection, independent contractor invoicing and payment, and reimbursement processes, and thereby served as an important financial internal control as part of NEO's internal control system.

C. NEO engaged NACSA to conduct an external evaluation of its ability to effectively authorize charter schools in 2014-15 to gain feedback to improve the organization, and then again in 2018-2019. NEO continued to use the feedback in 2024-25 in its continuous improvement in authorizing. MDE also evaluated NEO in 2015 and in 2020 and NEO continued to utilize the feedback from the Minnesota Authorizer Performance Evaluation System (MAPES) in 2024-25. Evidence of NEO's continuous improvement is the improvement from the Satisfactory level of performance as measured through MAPES in 2015, to the Commendable level of performance as measured through MAPES in 2020. In 2025 overall, NEO met 44 performance review criteria out of 47. To address the three criteria not met, NEO allocated additional expenditures in our five-year budget to maintenance of documentation to ensure that NEO will have complete and accurate documentation for meeting all indicators.

D. NEO staff continued to recruit and engage NEO Advisors who are independent contractors that serve as external experts with the capacity (knowledge and skill) to provide high quality observations and questions related to overseeing, monitoring, and evaluating authorized charter schools.

The NEO Advisors were contracted for specific services and paid specific amounts for those services in the areas of academic, organizational, governance, and financial oversight, monitoring, and evaluation. The NEO Advisors provided feedback on NEO processes and procedures including new charter school applications, school site visits, school document review, school board meeting observations, and school expansions. NEO staff regularly reviewed and used the feedback in continuous improvement.

E. NEO surveyed authorized schools to identify the resources, technical support, and information to provide during the Celebrations of Leading and Learning that NEO facilitated twice during the school year.

NEO staff made it a point to regularly ask authorized school board members and school leaders about how NEO could best support school success, within the role of the authorizer (while respecting the autonomy of the authorized schools) and used that feedback to improve the work.

F. NEO staff met weekly throughout 2024-25 for the purpose of authorizer self-evaluation.

1. NEO staff regularly evaluated progress with implementation of the strategies that NEO utilizes to support school success using the NEO Touchpoint Dashboard. The NEO Touchpoint Dashboard was developed to monitor and evaluate progress during the year with completing scheduled meetings with authorized schools including board meeting observations, formal site visits, informal learning walks, data meetings to examine progress toward contract goals, finance meetings to examine current financial status compared to budgeted and projected, and readiness to open site visits. The Touchpoint Dashboard informs NEO staff and board if completion of the meetings is keeping pace with the percent of the year passed, when the meetings have been scheduled so NEO staff can follow up as needed to schedule them, and when the meetings are completed and for which schools.

2. NEO staff continued to update systems and associated resources to remain current and improve our work in response to feedback from NEO Advisors, staff, authorized school leadership, and external organizations including but not limited to MDE, MACSA, and MACS.

3. NEO staff regularly reviewed and improved systems for how NEO facilitates sharing of effective practices. For example, NEO continued to improve the process for facilitating sharing of effective charter school practices at the NEO Celebration of Leading and Learning by continuing to refine associated templates, resources, and trackers. In addition, for example, NEO continued to refine associated templates, resources, and process for managing sessions with MDE officials to facilitate sharing of information in response to authorized school needs.

4. NEO staff regularly reviewed and improved how NEO provides oversight, monitoring and evaluation of authorized schools' on-time and accurate submissions.
For example, NEO continued to refine and improve associated templates, resources, and process for facilitation of sharing of information to support on-time and accurate submission rates. NEO developed and refined trackers to support the verification of on-time and accurate reporting and other time-sensitive requirements. In addition, NEO staff continued to refine and improve associated templates, resources, and process with authorized schools to monitor and evaluate progress toward contract goals to support clarity and a shared understanding of the progress and next steps.

5. NEO continued to improve workflow by improving access to templates, tools, and trackers to oversee and monitor the work. For example, NEO staff continued to review and improve how NEO coordinates work with independent contractors and with NEO staff utilizing Google sheets to house, allocate appropriate permissions, and update authorized school Performance Frameworks. NEO staff continued to review and improve how NEO coordinates work with independent contractors and with NEO staff utilizing Google sites, a NEO workflow calendar, and NEO Touchpoint Dashboard.

Authorizer High Quality Authorizing Dissemination (A.10)

Describe how your organization disseminated best authorizing practices and/or assisted other authorizers in high quality authorizing over the past year.

A. NEO staff served on the Minnesota Association of Charter School Authorizer (MACSA) Effective Practices Committees to help plan and implement the agendas and facilitating the sharing of statewide charter school data with MACSA after making a data request to MDE for the dataset, so that MACSA could monitor and evaluate the performance of the sector.

B. NEO participated in the Minnesota Charter School Leadership Conference June 9-11, 2025 in Bemidji, Minnesota where we facilitated sessions on financial oversight for authorizers.

C. NEO continued to share ideas for improving communication and collaboration with authorizers and MDE for improving school/student success. Some of the MDE divisions/centers and officials provided timely and valuable information to charter school leaders at facilitated meetings in response. We look forward to continued progress with other items.

1. Facilitate Meetings between School Leaders and MDE Officials from different divisions/centers based on school needs.
2. Make the 'High-Quality Charter School Eligibility List for Expansion and Replication' criteria spreadsheet more transparent. Schools and authorizers should be able to understand why schools were or were not identified as high-quality by MDE.
3. Identify the submissions required for the 'High-Quality Eligibility List for Expansion and Replication' in the 'Reporting Calendar' for charter schools.
4. Provide notifications of critical authorizer and charter school submissions including those required for the 'High-Quality Eligibility List for Expansion and Replication'.
5. Provide a guide for schools with clear charter school Start-up Grant (CSP) guidelines informed by other states such as Washington and Michigan that have excellent guides.
6. Make statewide charter school performance data more accessible, for example, via the Report Card website (include all charter school data in the drop-down menus regarding performance).
7. Copy Authorizers on timely MDE communications to schools if communication is compliance related because authorizers are an interested party. Develop and use a system to alert charter schools and authorizers if MDE payments exceed reported average daily membership (ADM). NEO observed that the delay in notification of overpayment from MDE to charter schools due to discrepancies in actual pupil units upon which aid is allocated, caused cash flow challenges statewide. NEO continued to increase oversight of charter school finance by monitoring actual pupil units, budgeted pupil units, and the pupil units that MDE uses to calculate the school aid.

D. NEO also provided and continues to disseminate practices to individual authorizers upon their request.

E. NEO continues to make available the charter board training and development site to all authorizers and schools they authorize.

The total courses completed by the end of the fiscal year 2025 was about 9355. This represents a 25.5% increase in the total number of courses that had been completed since the end of fiscal year 2025.

We have increased the number of unique users that have completed a course from 802 in 2023-2024 year to 1,006 in the 2024-2025 year, an increase of 25.40%.

The average number of unique users increased from 47 users per month in the 2023-2024 year to 53 users per month in the 2024-2025 year.

Many charter boards have added training to their regular board meeting agenda and are taking courses together as a board at their board meetings as part of their charter board training and development plan.

Many charter boards have added training to their regular board meeting agenda and are taking courses together as a board at their board meetings as part of their charter board training and development plan.

Charter School Support, Development and Technical Assistance (B.7)

Describe how your organization supported its portfolio of charter schools through intentional assistance and development offerings over the past year.

NEO's mission is to authorize and oversee charter schools through consistent, ongoing, and robust evaluation to achieve significant and measurable student growth.

To operationalize the mission, NEO:

A. Provided consistent, ongoing, and robust feedback to the schools that NEO authorizes. NEO conducted board meeting observations and site visits, reviewed key documents such as annual budgets, audits and annual reports, and reviewed the school's contract goals as articulated in each school's unique School Performance Framework, as well as communicated with the school leaders and board chairs throughout the year. NEO allocated resources to ensure that the feedback and evaluation that the schools received was the highest quality by contracting only with proven experts in the areas of charter school academic performance, compliance, governance, and financial oversight.

B. Facilitated the exchange of successful practices among the authorized schools. NEO hosted the Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 Celebration of Leading and Learning to 1) clarify expectations and provide school leaders an opportunity to review the school status relative to those expectations, 2) facilitate sharing of successful practices, 3) provide technical support in areas of need, and 4) recognize schools for their successes.

C. Provided technical support to authorized schools.

Following are examples of technical assistance sessions that NEO facilitated by engaging the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) in presentations to address charter school questions, areas of confusion, and areas where more information was needed to meet regulations.

NEO is grateful for the support from those who have provided it at MDE and PELSB!

Date	Facilitated Technical Support	MDE/PELSB Experts
9/13/2024	PELSB Licensure Q&A Session	Caren Custer
9/16/2024	Online Learning Updates and Q&A Session	Jeff Plaman
10/15/2024	Minnesota Common Course Catalogue Information Session	Karen Millette
12/13/2024	READ Act Information Session	Julie Novak
1/22/2025	Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) Information Session	June Reineke
1/24/2025	READ Act Information Session - Part II	Julie Novak
4/25/2025	Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) Information Session	June Reineke

D. Maintained the Performance Framework of each authorized school. Each school has a unique Performance Framework that articulates the school's goals for the term of the contract. Each school's Performance Framework is maintained in a Google Sheet and shared with the board members and school leadership of the school so that the school and NEO have transparent, ongoing access to shared information about the school's progress toward contract goals. Each year, NEO meets with each authorized school leader, the board chair, board members and in some cases, the staff of the school, to review the school's current performance status and provide school support, development, and technical assistance with using the Performance Framework to monitor and evaluate progress toward contract renewal goals.

High-Quality Charter School Replication and Dissemination of Best School Practices (B.8)

Describe how your organization promoted model replication and dissemination of best practices of high-quality charters schools over the past year.

NEO planned and promoted the replication and dissemination of successful high-quality school practices in the following ways:

A. In 2024-2025, 3 of the 15 charter schools identified by the Minnesota Department of Education as "High-Quality" for the purpose of eligibility of the Charter School Program Expansion and Replication Grant, were schools that NEO authorized, the most of any Minnesota charter school authorizer. They were Sejong Academy, Saint Cloud Math and Science Academy, and Urban Academy. NEO continued to disseminate information about effective practices of these high-quality charter schools. For example, NEO facilitated 3 learning walks with Agamim Classical Academy, Aspire Academy, and Star of the North Academy, at Urban Academy to facilitate the dissemination of high-quality school practices for the implementation of the READ Act (Science of Reading).

B. NEO continued to disseminate information about and promote expansion and replication of high-quality charter school programs as well. Great Oaks Academy is a high-quality charter school as measured by the school's performance framework exemplary performance rating. NEO disseminated information to Great Oaks Academy about applying for an expansion. Great Oaks Academy received approval to expand to high school and to an additional site. In 2023-2024, Great Oaks Academy expanded to the second site, and in 2024-2025, Great Oaks Academy moved to Eagan, providing Eagan with a high-quality classical education replication.

C. To facilitate exchange of effective practices among authorized schools for the purpose of each school's continuous improvement NEO held fall and spring Celebrations of Leading and Learning:

<u>Fall 2024 Celebration of Leading and Learning Presentations, November 14th, 2024</u>

1. Novation Education Opportunities – Ways to Monitor/Improve School Performance
2. Squires, Waldspurger & Mace, P.A.; John Edison – Updates to Employment Policies and Practices
3. Goff Public; Madeleine Rush and Cali Torell – Media Training/Community Relationships
4. Independent Consultant; Ron Berger – Shared Tools for Monitoring Financial Performance
5. Novation Education Opportunities – Compliance Kahoot - Updates to Charter School Law

<u>Spring 2025 Celebration of Leading and Learning Presentations, May 21st, 2025</u>

1. Novation Education Opportunities – Multiple Measure Gallery Walk
2. Independent Consultant; Ron Berger – Numbers Missing From Financials that Boards Need to Know
3. Squires, Waldspurger & Mace, P.A.; John Edison – Update on MN Paid Family and Medical Leave and Data Privacy
4. Leveraging Federal Dollars to Build Strong Programs; Alicia Waeffler
5. Novation Education Opportunities – Navigating the Minnesota Authorizer Performance Evaluation System

D. NEO also shared effective practices and useful resources identified during learning walks, site visits, and board observations, with authorized schools.
E. NEO facilitated informal site visits (learning walks) focused on the school's current needs or priorities, with the goals of supporting a shared vision of the use of effective schoolwide strategies and of identifying successful practices and resources that were shared with other schools.
F. NEO provided a project management system (Basecamp) and shared resources to pre-operational schools working to meet readiness to open indicators.

G. NEO identified and recognized schools that demonstrated exemplary performance, through awards such as the NEO Stewardship Award in Finance and Academic Achievement Awards, to recognize, promote, and share successful practices.
H. NEO continued to procure resources and ideas from charter school board members about effective practices and useful resources to share through the www.mncharterboard.com charter board training and development site. NEO continued to inform charter schools of the site, maintained the site, and facilitated access to the site to facilitate sharing of effective practices and resources that charter schools have found useful.

Authorizer's Performance Review Findings

Describe your organizations completion of performance review findings (if applicable) listed under Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 124E.05, subdivision 5 (Laws of Minnesota 2025, chapter 10, article 5, section 5).

Novation Education Opportunities (NEO) met 44 of 47 Minnesota Authorizer Performance Evaluation System (MAPES) performance review criteria.

The three review criteria that NEO did not meet are related to maintenance of documentation.

NEO has allocated additional expenditures in each of the upcoming board-approved 5-year budget years for additional document maintenance support.

See the following pages for the performance review criteria detail.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure 1: New Charter School Decisions

Performance Rating: Satisfactory

Measure Criterion: Authorizer's new charter school application review processes are comprehensive; include clear application questions and guidance; and include fair, transparent procedures, timelines and rigorous criteria.

- **Finding**: Met. The authorizer's AAP outlines its new charter school application process, which includes an intent to apply form, an application, and a capacity interview. The application contains comprehensive questions across all key areas, including marketing and outreach, educational program, operations, and budget, in addition to providing guidance on the components of a quality application. The authorizer has templates that must be completed by applicants as well as evaluation criteria associated with application questions, and a timeline (e.g., application submission by January 2).

Measure Criterion: Authorizer's new charter school application review practices, decisions, and resulting actions are consistent across the portfolio of charter schools.

- **Finding**: Met. Review of application review materials for five charter school applicants finds that the authorizer's practices, decisions, and resulting actions are consistent. For example, completed evaluation rubrics demonstrate that reviewers are required to review applications based on a common rubric, and the rubric results are then averaged into final ratings. Additionally, per the AAP, applicants may only be recommended for approval if they score Satisfactory or better in each area and Good overall (at least 60% of points possible). Review of application materials finds that the authorizer was consistent with this practice, as schools such as Surad, Ocean of Wisdom, and Bultum, all of which received a Satisfactory or better rating, were recommended for approval. However, Creative Minds and Sky High Schools, which received Fair and Inadequate ratings in some sections and an overall score lower than 60%, were recommended for denial.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer's new charter school application review practices, decisions, and resulting actions align with its commissioner-approved authorizer application (AAA)/commissioner-approved authorizing plan (AAP).

- **Finding**: Met. Review of application review materials finds that the authorizer followed the process set forth in its AAP. For example, it required applicants to submit an intent to apply form which was followed by a formal invitation to apply and the submission of the full application. This was followed by a capacity interview and a final determination on approval or denial. Additionally, as per the AAP, emails and calendar invites demonstrate that reviewers participated in an inter-rater reliability training as outlined in the AAP. Evaluation rubrics included a point system for evaluation; documentation from more-recent applications (Creative Minds and Ocean of Wisdom) showed a shift to use of a drop-down for ratings that explicitly states the rating terminology. Authorizer staff noted in the interview that the change has clarified the definition of "satisfactory" and improved the accuracy and consistency of identifying performance levels across areas.

Promising Practices: NEO applies clear rubrics, timelines, and inter-rater reliability training to ensure fair, transparent, and data-informed determinations for applications, renewals, and expansions. These practices promote consistency and reduce subjectivity, helping schools understand exactly how decisions are made.

Key Evidence:

- AAP
- Performance Measure 1 narrative
- FY 2021 Bultum Academy New Charter School Decisions
- FY 2022 Surad Academy New Charter School Decisions
- FY 2023 Sky High Schools New Charter School Decisions
- FY 2024 Ocean of Wisdom School New Charter School Decisions
- FY 2025 Creative Minds New Charter School Decisions
- Ocean of Wisdom School Application
- Authorizer Annual Reports (FY 2021, FY 2022, FY 2023 and FY 2024)
- Authorizer Interview September 16, 2025
- MAPES Document Submission September 22, 2025

Performance Measure 2: Ready-to-Open Determinations

Performance Rating: Not Satisfactory

Measure Criterion: Authorizer's ready-to-open processes are comprehensive and include fair, transparent procedures, timelines and rigorous criteria.

- **Finding**: Met. As outlined in its AAP, NEO has a robust ready-to-open process that includes a checklist encompassing 13 categories (e.g., learning program, student achievement and accountability, governance, budget and financial). Additionally, in the AAP, NEO defines specific tasks and deadlines (e.g., school administrator hired at least 150 days prior to school opening, at least 125% of projected budgeted students must be officially enrolled). In the school leader survey, most respondents either indicated "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" when asked if the authorizer's ready-to-open processes are comprehensive.

Measure Criterion: If ready-to-open determinations were made, the school did not close in its first contract term due to factors indicating it was not ready to open at the time the determination was made (e.g., insufficient enrollment, staffing, facility, etc.).

- **Finding**: Not Met. Review of completed ready-to-open checklists for Quantum STEAM, Escuela Exitos, STEAM Academy, Bultum Academy, Link Public Schools, and Surad Academy finds that the schools met all of the ready-to-open requirements and were deemed ready-to-open. For example, ready to open standards in NEO's AAP require "125% of budgeted enrollment is registered and verified (packeted) by 60 days prior to school's opening day". NEO's Ready-to-Open determination documentation for Link Public Schools included email correspondence, meeting invites, a checklist with the enrollment expectations marked as complete, and a roster with student names; however, documentation does not indicate the students as packeted and associated dates are either outside the required date quoted above or non-existent. NEO may benefit from a reevaluation of its ready-to-open processes and documentation to ensure that enrollment viability and other early-stage sustainability factors align with their AAP and are more fully assessed before approval.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer's ready-to-open practices, decisions, and resulting actions are consistent across the portfolio of charter schools.

- **Finding**: Met. Completed ready-to-open checklists for five schools across the review term demonstrate that they all underwent the ready-to-open process, and the authorizer verified each indicator to determine whether the schools were prepared to open. In the school leader survey, respondents either indicated "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" when asked if NEO's ready-to-open practices, decisions, and resulting actions are consistent.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer's ready-to-open practices, decisions, and resulting actions align with its AAA/AAP.

- **Finding**: Not Met. Documentation related to ready-to-open processes during the evaluation period demonstrates alignment with the NEO's AAP. NEO's AAP includes a comprehensive ready-to-open checklist and process, and review of completed checklists finds that the authorizer was consistent in its implementation of the ready-to-open process with all five schools.

For example, the AAP states that the authorizer will verify whether a school leader has been hired by March 15th, and the authorizer's tracker and Escuela Exitos board meeting minutes indicate this practice was completed. Additionally, the AAP requires a completed transportation survey and form, and the authorizer's tracker and the signed form for Bultum Academy was provided as evidence showing that this target was achieved. Finally, Ready to Open standards in NEO's AAP require "125% of budgeted enrollment is registered and verified (packeted) by 60 days prior to school's opening day". Finally, NEO's Ready-to-Open determination documentation for Link Public Schools included email correspondence, meeting invites, a checklist with the enrollment expectations marked as complete, and a roster with student names; however, documentation does not indicate the students as packeted and associated dates are either outside the required date quoted above or non-existent. NEO may benefit from a reevaluation of its ready-to-open processes and documentation to ensure that enrollment viability and other early-stage sustainability factors align with their AAP and are more fully assessed before approval.

Key Evidence:

- AAP
- Performance Measure 2 narrative
- FY 2021 Quantum STEAM - Ready-to-Open Determinations
- FY 2022 STEAM Academy - Ready-to-Open Determinations
- FY 2022 Escuela Exitos - Ready-to-Open Determinations
- FY 2023 Bultum Academy - Ready-to-Open Determinations
- FY 2024 Surad Academy - Ready-to-Open Determinations
- FY 2023 Link Public Schools - Ready-to-Open Determinations
- Charter school survey
- MAPES Document Submission September 22, 2025
- MAPES Document Submission November 24, 2025

Performance Measure 3: Charter School Expansion Decisions

Performance Rating: Not Satisfactory

Measure Criterion: Authorizer's expansion review processes are comprehensive; include clear application questions and guidance; and include fair, transparent procedures, timelines and rigorous criteria.

- **Finding**: Met. As outlined in the AAP and the expansion application, NEO has a comprehensive expansion review process that consists of an application with clear application questions, an aligned evaluation rubric, timeline (e.g., submission by September 1) and evaluation criteria (e.g., data must strongly substantiate the need and projected enrollment, 1-3 rating scale) which demonstrate fair, transparent procedures, timelines and rigorous criteria. For example, the expansion application manual states that applicants must achieve a satisfactory rating for each section in order for approval.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer's expansion review practices, decisions, and resulting actions are consistent across the portfolio of charter schools.

- **Finding**: Met. Review of emails and completed evaluation rubrics shows the authorizer implemented consistent practices, decisions, and resulting actions across expansion reviews. For example, completed applications indicate that applicants were required to submit expansion applications, and completed evaluation rubrics demonstrate reviewers were required to rate and note comments based on established criteria. Additionally, in the school leader survey, respondents either indicated "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" when asked if the authorizer's expansion review practices, decisions, and resulting actions are consistent. Expansion review Information provided to the board during meetings when expansion decisions were considered for Star of the North, Great Oaks, and Achieve Language Academy included a summary of major sections, points possible, ratings of Satisfactory or higher in each section, and a recommendation.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer's expansion review practices, decisions, and resulting actions align with its AAA/AAP.

- **Finding**: Not Met. Review of documentation finds that NEO follows its expansion review practices as outlined in the AAP and also makes decisions and resulting actions aligned with the AAP. For example, the AAP prescribes that applicants must submit an application based on the established application prompts, and completed applications show that schools did submit expansion applications. As noted above, the AAP states that applicants must achieve a Satisfactory rating for each section in order to be considered for approval, and completed evaluation rubrics and summaries finds that applicants who were approved did receive ratings of Satisfactory or higher in each section. However, the department's review of NEO's supplemental affidavit for Great Oaks Academy notes misalignment due to missing evidence of analyses for two measures.

Key Evidence:

- AAP
- Performance Measure 3 narrative
- FY 2021 Achieve Language Academy Expansion Decision
- FY 2022 Universal Academy Expansion Decision
- FY 2023 Star of the North Academy Expansion Decision
- FY 2024 Great Oaks Academy Expansion Decision
- Authorizer Annual Reports (FY 2021, FY 2022, FY 2023 and FY 2024)
- Charter school survey
- MAPES Document Submission September 22, 2025
- MAPES Document Submission November 24, 2025

Performance Measure 4: Change in Authorizer Decisions

Performance Rating: Satisfactory

Measure Criterion: Authorizer's change in authorizer review processes are comprehensive; include clear application questions and guidance; and include fair, transparent procedures, timelines and rigorous criteria.

- **Finding**: Met. NEO's AAP outlines a robust change in authorizer review process that includes three main steps: change in authorizer form submission; site visit; and NEO Board decision. Additionally, the AAP includes timelines (e.g., change in authorizer form is due by October 1, site visit within 30 days of receipt of the change in authorizer form, board decision within 30 days of the site visit). The change in authorizer form indicates that schools meeting Satisfactory and Exemplary performance levels as measured by NEO's performance framework will be considered for approval.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer's change in authorizer review practices, decisions, and resulting actions are consistent across the portfolio of charter schools.

- **Finding**: Met. Review of emails and application materials for Escuela Exitos and Hmong College Prep Academy shows that NEO is consistent in its practices, decisions, and resulting actions related to change in authorizer reviews. For example, completed change in authorizer forms from both schools demonstrate they were required to submit the forms, and both schools were recommended for approval based on meeting established requirements. Further, based on the MAPES compliance data spreadsheet, both Escuela Exitos and Hmong College Prep Academy were approved and met statutory deadlines. Evaluators note that in the absence of comprehensive school performance information for pre-operational schools requesting a change in authorizer (e.g., Escuela Exitos), NEO appropriately added their ready-to-open criteria to the existing evaluation expectations and may benefit from formally adding this to their change in authorizer process.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer's change in authorizer review practices, decisions, and resulting actions align with its AAA/AAP.

- **Finding**: Met. The change in authorizer process articulated in NEO's AAP includes the submission of a change in authorizer form, and completed forms from two schools demonstrate alignment. Additionally, a completed NEO performance framework for Hmong College Prep Academy shows that the school met all indicators satisfactorily and was recommended for approval (in alignment with the AAP). For Escuela Exitos, which had not yet opened at the time of the request, NEO completed a ready-to-open checklist and found that the school met all of the indicators satisfactorily and was recommended for approval. In the interview, school leaders confirmed the processes and expectations, noting that they were streamlined and straightforward.

Measure Criterion: When there is mutual agreement not to renew a contract, the authorizer that is a party to the existing contract consistently informs the proposed authorizer about the fiscal, operational, and student performance status of the school, including unmet contract outcomes and other outstanding contractual obligations.

- **Finding**: Not Applicable. No NEO-authorized charter schools have sought a change in authorizer as confirmed by the Performance Measure 4 narrative and school leader interview.

Key Evidence:

- AAP
- Performance Measure 4 narrative
- FY 2021 Escuela Exitos Change in Authorizer Decision
- FY 2022 Hmong College Prep Academy Change in Authorizer Decision
- MAPES Compliance Data Spreadsheet - NEO
- School Leader Interviews September 15, 2025; September 30, 2025; and October 3, 2025

Performance Measure 5: Performance Outcomes and Standards

Performance Rating: Satisfactory

Measure Criterion: Authorizer performance outcomes and standards for its portfolio of charter schools meet current statutory performance outcomes and standards.

- **Finding**: Met. Review of the department's review rubric of the authorizer's AAP finds that NEO adequately addressed all elements for performance outcomes and standards, which includes the development of a performance framework. Additionally, the performance framework is included in the contracts of all operating, developing, preoperational, and closed charter schools. In the interview, school leaders described NEO's approach as clear, transparent, and responsive — marked by strong accountability systems, a well-defined performance framework, and consistent communication that keeps schools and stakeholders informed and supported.

Measure Criterion: Contracts define clear, measurable and attainable academic, financial and operational performance outcomes and standards, and consequences for meeting or not meeting performance outcomes and standards.

- **Finding**: Met. All of the authorizer's contracts for operating, developing, preoperational, and closed charter schools include a full performance framework that specifies performance outcomes and standards for academics, finance, and operations. For example, one outcome is that the school's combined proficiency rate exceeds the state combined proficiency rate. Additionally, the contracts outline consequences for meeting or not meeting performance outcomes and standards.

Measure Criterion: Implementation of performance outcomes and standards are consistent across the portfolio of charter schools.

- **Finding**: Met. All of the authorizer's contracts with its schools include consistent performance frameworks that outline each school's performance outcomes and standards for academics, finance, and operations. Review of completed performance frameworks and school-created supporting documentation for Achieve Language Academy, Agamim Classical Academy, Nerstrand Elementary, Hmong College Prep Academy, and Kato Public Charter School confirmed that the authorizer assessed multiple years of each school's performance in school years 2021-2022 through 2023-2024 in alignment with their performance goals. For example, the authorizer's standard analysis of Kato Public Charter School performance against the framework expectations showed that they earned at least 50% in each performance area and 60.17% of points overall in school year 2023-2024; the school was issued a three year contract renewal as an outcome.

Measure Criterion: Performance outcomes and standards in charter contracts align with the performance outcomes and standards in the authorizer's AAA/AAP.

- **Finding**: Met. In the AAP, the authorizer includes an oversight plan that indicates that it will review each school's student/school academic performance, climate, operations/governance, and finance throughout the year based on a performance framework. The performance outcomes and standards included as Academic Performance Indicators in the authorizer's contracts with its schools are identical to those outlined in the AAP; for example, every contract includes a math goal with targets based on the NWEA MAP assessment.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer holds charter schools accountable to academic, financial and operational performance outcomes and standards defined in the contract.

- **Finding**: Met. Review of documentation for Achieve Language Academy, Agamim Classical Academy, Hmong College Prep Academy, and Kato Public Charter School finds that the authorizer holds its schools accountable to contractual performance outcomes and standards. For example, academic results from school year 2023-2024 for Achieve Language Academy show that the school did not meet its academic performance outcomes. Emails between the authorizer and school, as well as the school improvement plan (SIP) demonstrate that the authorizer and school communicated about the deficiencies and the SIP was developed to address the deficiencies. Materials from a school presentation to the authorizer were also provided to show how the school addressed the deficiencies and demonstrated adequate progress against the SIP and contract goals, board minutes following the SIP process confirmed the school was renewed.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer's performance outcomes and standards reflect a clear strategy to ensure charter schools achieve the primary purpose in statute.

- **Finding**: Met. The authorizer's performance framework, included in each of the authorizer's contracts with its schools, meets current statutory performance outcomes and standards and has been developed to ensure charter schools meet statutory purposes.

Promising Practices:

- NEO embeds a clear, measurable performance framework in every contract, using dashboards and standardized criteria to monitor academic, financial, and operational outcomes consistently across schools. This ensures schools clearly understand expectations and receive data-informed feedback throughout the year, promoting transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.
- NEO's contracting process allows schools to review drafts, suggest amendments, and receive updates on statutory or policy changes, fostering shared understanding and accountability. This collaborative approach helps ensure contracts are clear, current, and aligned with both statutory requirements and school needs.

Key Evidence:

- AAP
- Performance Measure 5 narrative
- Charter school survey
- NEO Contracts (Achieve Language Academy, Agamim Classical Academy, Nerstrand Elementary, Hmong College Prep Academy, and Kato Public Charter School)
- School Leader Interviews September 15, 2025; September 30, 2025; and October 3, 2025
- MAPES Document Submission November 24, 2025

Performance Measure 6: Ongoing Monitoring and Oversight

Performance Rating: Satisfactory

Measure Criterion: Authorizer implements clear and comprehensive standards and processes for monitoring and oversight including interventions.

- **Finding**: Met. According to the AAP, the authorizer articulates its monitoring and oversight processes, such as site visits (at least two per year), board meeting observations, compliance evaluations, and interventions. It states that its monitoring and oversight processes are guided by the performance framework, which establishes the performance standards assessed throughout the contract term. Data for FY 23-25 from Hmong College Prep Academy shows NEO implementation of their monitoring and oversight processes; for example, teacher licensure checks and reviews of UFARS balance sheets were conducted each year at Hmong College Prep Academy.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer conducts charter monitoring and oversight that competently evaluates academic, financial, and operational performance and monitors charter school compliance with applicable law.

- **Finding**: Met. The FY 23-25 Touchpoint Dashboards and oversight and monitoring data from schools (e.g., Hmong College Prep Academy, Kato Public Charter School, Achieve Language Academy) demonstrate that the authorizer assesses charter school compliance and academic, financial, and operational performance annually. For example, a completed board observation forms from Hmong College Prep Academy board meeting in FY 23-25 affirm the school's compliance with Open Meeting Law. In the interview, school leaders described NEO's oversight as consistent, transparent, and supportive—characterized by clear evaluation processes, high expectations, and a balanced approach that provides both accountability and autonomy through structured frameworks, collaborative walkthroughs, and responsive guidance.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer's procedures and practices on school autonomy recognize schools' authority over academics, financials and operations and respect schools' authority over day-to-day management.

- **Finding**: Met. In the school leader survey, respondents either indicated "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" when asked if the authorizer's procedures and practices respect and recognize a school's authority over academics, financial, operations and day-to-day management. Additionally, the authorizer's board-adopted conflict of interest and school autonomy policy acknowledges schools' autonomy and is required to be signed each year by those affiliated with NEO. Correspondence with schools also confirms that NEO clearly defines its role as authorizer—not operator—emphasizing that its observations and feedback are intended solely for schools' consideration and decision-making.

Measure Criterion: Decisions made regarding intervention are aligned with data generated under monitoring and oversight activities.

- **Finding**: Met. Contracts state that schools that fall below a Satisfactory rating in the performance framework overall and/or in any performance area must implement a continuous improvement plan. Review of documentation from Kato Public Charter School, Achieve Language Academy, and three years of oversight evidence from Hmong College Prep Academy finds that the authorizer used data from monitoring and oversight activities to inform intervention decisions. For example, a January 2024 notice from NEO to Kato Public Charter School indicates that based on current performance against the performance framework and compliance concerns, NEO requested the submission of an intervention plan that addressed the deficiencies.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer's monitoring and oversight activities are consistent across the portfolio of charter schools.

- **Finding**: Met. According to the FY 21-25 Touchpoint Dashboards, the authorizer consistently conducted monitoring and oversight activities across its schools. More specifically, the dashboard identifies each school and notes dates of activities such as board observations, learning walks, site visits, etc. Additionally, in the school leader survey, respondents either indicated "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" when asked if NEO's monitoring and oversight activities are consistent across schools. Examples of consistent implementation are seen through NEO's interventions with Kato Public Charter School, Achieve Language Academy, and Hmong College Prep Academy. Additionally, NEO conducted consistent annual evaluations for Agamim Classical Academy, Hmong College Prep Academy, and Kato Public Charter School. In the interview, school leaders emphasized that, while consistent, NEO allows flexibility for each to demonstrate progress in ways that reflect their unique missions, student populations, and instructional approaches.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer's monitoring and oversight activities align with its stated oversight and monitoring processes in its AAA/AAP.

- **Finding**: Met. NEO's AAP outlines its oversight and monitoring processes which are aligned to the performance framework. Review of FY 21-25 Touchpoint Dashboards and oversight and monitoring activities for Hmong College Prep Academy over the contract term thus far demonstrates that the authorizer followed the AAP (e.g., conducted site visits, board observations, etc.). As noted above, interventions for Kato Public Charter School and Achieve Language Academy were aligned with the processes outlined in the AAP. More specifically, documentation shows that Kato Public Charter School continued to not meet expectations which led to nonrenewal.

Promising Practices:

- NEO's regular site visits, learning walks, and performance dashboards ensure oversight decisions and interventions are grounded in data and applied consistently across the portfolio. This approach helps identify issues early and allows for targeted support that is fair, transparent, and aligned with each school's performance.

- NEO maintains high expectations while respecting school autonomy, allowing flexibility for schools to meet standards in ways aligned with their unique missions and student

populations. This balance encourages innovation while still ensuring accountability to common performance expectations.

Key Evidence:

- AAP
- Performance Measure 6 narrative
- FY 2023 Hmong College Prep Academy Ongoing Monitoring and Oversight
- FY 2024 Hmong College Prep Academy Ongoing Monitoring and Oversight
- FY 2025 Hmong College Prep Academy Ongoing Monitoring and Oversight
- HCPA Performance Framework
- NEO Budgets
- FY 2025 Agamim Classical Academy Ongoing Monitoring and Oversight
- FY 2025 Kato Public Charter School Ongoing Monitoring and Oversight
- FY 2021-FY 2025 Touchpoint Dashboards
- FY 2025 Kato Public Charter School Intervention and Termination Decision
- FY 2025 Achieve Language Academy Intervention
- Charter school survey
- School Leader Interviews September 15, 2025; September 30, 2025; and October 3, 2025
- MAPES Document Submission September 22, 2025

Performance Measure 7: Charter Contracting, Renewal, and Termination Decisions

Performance Rating: Satisfactory

Measure Criterion: Contracts in authorizer's portfolio of charter schools meet current statutory requirements.

- **Finding**: Met. Based on the department's compliance spreadsheet and its review to date of new, renewal, nonrenewal, and revised contracts from the review period, all contracts were found to be statutorily compliant.

Measure Criterion: Contracts clearly state the material terms, rights, and responsibilities of the school and the authorizer.

- **Finding**: Met. The authorizer's contracts with its schools outline the material terms, rights, and responsibilities of the school and the authorizer in Sections 1, 6, and 7. For example, in Section 7, the contracts state that the authorizer will designate a liaison for the school. Additionally, in the school leader survey, all respondents either indicated "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" when asked if contracts clearly state the material terms, rights, and responsibilities of the school and authorizer.

Measure Criterion: Contracts were executed no later than the first day of the renewal period.

- **Finding**: Met. According to the MAPES compliance data spreadsheet, the authorizer met the contract execution deadline and was statutorily compliant for all schools over the review term.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer has transparent and rigorous standards and processes designed to use comprehensive academic, financial, operational and student performance data to make merit-based renewal decisions and terminate charters when necessary to protect student and public interests.

- **Finding**: Met. Documentation related to Hmong College Prep Academy's renewal and Kato Public Charter School's termination demonstrates the authorizer has robust standards and processes to make merit-based renewal decisions and terminate charters when necessary. More specifically, materials such as completed performance frameworks, email communications, improvement plans, and intervention notices indicate that NEO uses its performance framework and oversight and monitoring processes to inform all decision-making including renewal and termination.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer executes contract amendments for material changes to current school plans when necessary and not in lieu of conducting renewal evaluations.

- **Finding**: Met. Emails and board agendas demonstrate that the authorizer discussed, approved, and executed contract amendments when necessary. St. Cloud Math and Science Academy's contract was amended to expand the grade span served. Additionally, a key metrics goal was removed from Hmong College Prep Academy's contract due to misalignment. In the interview, school leaders described NEO's contracting process as transparent, collaborative, and responsive—characterized by opportunities for feedback, flexibility to request amendments, and proactive communication regarding statutory or policy changes.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer's contracting, renewal, and termination practices, decisions, and resulting actions are consistent across its portfolio of charter schools.

- **Finding**: Met. Documentation for some of NEO's schools regarding contracting, renewal, and termination show that the authorizer consistently uses its performance framework and oversight and monitoring activities to inform decision making (e.g. NEO's nonrenewal of Kato Public Charter School's rests on them not meeting English Language Arts (ELA) and math proficiency expectations in the performance framework). Further, in the school leader survey, respondents either indicated "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" when asked if the authorizer's contracting, renewal, and termination practices, decisions, and resulting actions are consistent.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer's contracting, renewal, and termination practices, decisions, and resulting actions align with its AAA/AAP.

- **Finding**: Met. According to the AAP, NEO will request a continuous improvement plan for schools falling below a Satisfactory rating in the performance framework overall and/or in a performance area. Documentation from schools including Kato Public Charter School demonstrates that continuous improvement plans were required and monitored. Additionally, the AAP indicates that if the school does not meet the terms of the improvement plan and attain a Satisfactory rating by the end of the contract term, the school may be not renewed, and documentation for Kato Public Charter School indicates the authorizer followed these guidelines.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer's contracting, renewal, and termination standards and processes reflect a clear strategy to ensure charter schools achieve the primary purpose in statute.

- **Finding**: Met. All contracts include a performance framework that is aligned to state statute and assesses academic, operational, and financial performance along with compliance with applicable rules and regulations. Additionally, as outlined in the AAP, the authorizer has rigorous standards for contracting, renewal, and termination which demonstrate a commitment to high quality.

Key Evidence:

- AAP
- Hmong College Prep Academy contract
- Performance Measure 7 narrative
- Charter school survey
- FY 2025 Kato Public Charter School Nonrenewal Decision
- FY 2024 Hmong College Prep Academy Revision
- FY 2022 Saint Cloud Math and Science Academy Revision
- MAPES Compliance Data Spreadsheet - NEO
- School Leader Interviews September 15, 2025; September 30, 2025; and October 3, 2025

- MAPES Document Submission September 22, 2025

Performance Measure 8: Charter School Closure

Performance Rating: Satisfactory

Measure Criterion: Authorizer closure plans and processes are comprehensive with clear expectations, procedures, and timelines.

- **Finding**: Met. In both the AAP and the authorizer's school contracts, the closure plan and process are outlined in detail and include expectations, procedures, responsible parties, and some timelines. For example, the closure plan notes that the school's board must adopt the closure plan within 20 days of notification of closure, and the plan must be updated at least twice per month. Additionally, in the school leader survey, respondents either indicated "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" when asked if NEO has comprehensive closure plans and processes.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer fulfills obligations provided in the charter contract and included in the closure plan of the contract.

- **Finding**: Met. During the evaluation period, the authorizer had five schools in its portfolio close (Kato Public Charter School, Lafayette Public Charter School, Link Public Schools, Rochester STEM Academy, and SAGE Academy). Review of section 8 of the contracts and closure documentation for Link Public Schools and SAGE Academy finds that the authorizer adequately fulfilled contractual obligations related to closure. For example, the closure plan for SAGE Academy indicates the transfer of student records was completed by the school on August 20, 2024, and emails between the authorizer and the school demonstrate the authorizer regularly checked in with the school to ensure all items were completed.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer ensures the closure plan and financial information about the school's liabilities and assets are submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE).

- **Finding**: Met. Emails between the authorizer and the department demonstrate that the authorizer submitted the closure plan and financial information about the school's liabilities and assets for Link Public Charter School and SAGE Academy. For example, a September 2024 email from NEO to the department about SAGE Academy shows that the authorizer shared the closure plan, financial information about the school's liabilities and assets, an updated board roster, the school's point of contact for closure, and board meeting minutes.

Key Evidence:

- AAP
- Performance Measure 8 narrative
- Charter school survey
- FY 2024 SAGE Academy contract amendment
- FY 2023 Link Public Schools contract

- FY 2023 Link Public Schools Closure
- FY 2025 SAGE Academy Closure

Performance Measure 9: Authorizer Budget for Authorizing the Charter School Portfolio

Performance Rating: Satisfactory

Measure Criterion: Resource allocations for authorizing are at least consistent with resources to portfolio size ratio committed in its AAA/AAP.

- **Finding**: Met. According to the AAP, NEO will maintain at least one full-time employee (FTE) for every seven schools. Review of the narrative and NEO budgets finds that the authorizer currently has a ratio of 1 staff/advisor to 1.78 schools. In the interview, school leaders shared that NEO has enough employees to serve all schools under their portfolio adding they "get their money's worth."

Measure Criterion: Authorizer demonstrates resource allocations are sufficient to fulfill authorizing responsibilities (e.g., authorizer staff and contractor training, charter school oversight activities, etc.) and are commensurate with the needs and scale of its portfolio (e.g., income, expenditures, number and size of the charter schools in the portfolio).

- **Finding**: Met. The narrative and NEO budgets demonstrate that the authorizer currently has a staff/advisor to school ratio that is within the target established in the AAP. In this documentation, the authorizer also explains that the budget allows for 14 staff/advisors in order to fulfill authorizing responsibilities. The budgets also split out resource allocations based on authorizing tasks and show that funds are allocated to each authorizing responsibility (e.g., interventions, new charter decisions, etc.). Additionally, in the school leader survey, respondents either indicated "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" when asked if NEO demonstrates having resource allocations that are sufficient to fulfill authorizing responsibilities.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer staff changes occurred in relation to portfolio size.

- **Finding**: Met. In the narrative, the authorizer explained that it added a system's analyst position in July 2020 in response to the portfolio growing from 27 to 29 charter schools and review of the budget indicates there are currently three FTE.

Key Evidence:

- AAP
- Performance Measure 9 narrative
- Statements of income and expenditures (FY 2021, FY 2021, FY 2022, and FY 2023)
- Charter school survey
- FY 2021-2025 Budgeted to Actuals
- FY 2023-2030 NEO Budget
- FY 2021-2025 Touchpoint Dashboards

- School Leader Interviews September 15, 2025; September 30, 2025; and October 3, 2025

Performance Measure 10: Authorizer Operational Conflicts of Interest

Performance Rating: Satisfactory

Measure Criterion: Clear board-approved conflict of interest policy for authorizing exists and is intentionally implemented.

- **Finding**: Met. The authorizer has a conflict of interest and school autonomy policy that was originally adopted by its board in May 2012 and most recently revised in October 2018. The policy outlines the process for identifying and disclosing potential conflicts of interest (e.g., all NEO board members, employees, and advisors are required to sign an assurance form). Conflict of interest forms signed annually over the review team demonstrate that the policy has been implemented.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer avoids conflicts of interest that might affect its capacity to make objective, merit-based application and renewal decisions (e.g., involvement in school's performance).

- **Finding**: Met. Signed assurance forms from application reviewers and NEO staff and advisors demonstrate the authorizer checks to ensure processes are free from conflicts of interest and require full disclosure. Agendas and notes show a routine of starting each authorizer meeting by asking for staff / advisor disclosures of any conflicts of interest with schools. For example, one contractor indicates in their assurance form that they work with some NEO schools and requests not to be placed at any of them. In the school leader survey, respondents either indicated "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" when asked if NEO avoids conflicts of interest in regard to application and renewal decisions.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer ensures that application review and decision-making processes and charter school oversight are free of conflicts of interest, and requires full disclosure of any potential or perceived conflicts of interest between reviewers/decision-makers and applicants.

- **Finding**: Met. Signed assurance forms from application reviewers and NEO staff and advisors demonstrate the authorizer checks to ensure processes are free from conflicts of interest and require full disclosure. Signed assurance forms and emails show one contractor disclosed conflicts with some schools in the portfolio and no participation in NEO-related tasks at the identified schools. Additionally, in the school leader survey, respondents either indicated "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" when asked if the authorizer ensures application review and decision-making processes and charter school oversight are free of conflicts of interest.

Measure Criterion: Authorizer is able to provide at least one fully documented example of how it has successfully implemented its conflict of interest policy (e.g., via completion of disclosure forms, training staff, etc.).

- **Finding**: Met. Signed assurance forms from each year of the review term demonstrate that the authorizer followed its policy. Additionally, conflict of interest documentation for one contractor shows that when they disclosed their independent work with some of the authorizer's schools, the authorizer excluded the contractor from NEO-related work at those schools.

Measure Criterion: Implementation of policy has successfully prevented or resolved conflicts of interest in a timely, fair and appropriate manner.

- **Finding**: Met. Signed assurance forms from each year of the review term indicate that the authorizer regularly requires staff, board members, and advisors to submit forms and disclose any conflicts of interest. Additional documentation submitted shows how one contractor disclosed that they conduct independent work at some schools, there is no evidence the person was assigned to work at those same schools.

Measure Criterion: If MDE/evaluator inquires about a specific example known to the department, authorizer is able to provide evidence concerning the situation that demonstrates satisfactory resolution.

- **Finding**: Not applicable. Evidence of an open inquiry was submitted; however, the inquiry is currently under review with the department.

Promising Practices: NEO collects annual assurance forms, documents staff disclosures, and proactively resolves conflicts demonstrating strong integrity and transparency in application, oversight, and decision-making processes. This helps safeguard against conflicts of interest and reinforces confidence that decisions are fair and merit-based.

Key Evidence:

- AAP
- Performance Measure 10 narrative
- Charter school survey
- Signed Conflict of Interest Forms - FY 2020-2025
- Example of Preventing Conflicts of Interest
- 25.06-10 Clarifications re No Conflict of Interest 25.06-09
- MAPES Document Submission September 22, 2025

Performance Measure 11: Authorizer Compliance to Responsibilities in Statute

Performance Rating: Satisfactory

Measure Criterion: Since the start of the current review period, the authorizer was 100 percent compliant in all the areas stated in the measure origin.

- **Finding**: Met. NEO had a 100 percent compliance rating overall across the review period. Key Evidence:
- MAPES Compliance Data Spreadsheet - NEO

Appendix A: Authorizer Portfolio Information

Operational Schools: Achieve Language Academy, Agamim Classical Academy, Aspire Academy, Avalon Charter School, Bultum Academy, Discovery Charter School, Escuela Exitos, Great Oaks Academy, Great River School, Hmong College Prep Academy, Innovation Science and Technology Academy, Lionsgate Academy, Nerstrand Elementary, New Century Academy, New City School, North Metro Flex Academy, Quantum STEAM Academy, Sejong Academy, Star of the North Academy, St. Cloud Math and Science Academy, STEAM Academy, Surad Academy, TEAM Academy, Universal Academy, and Urban Academy

Preoperational Schools: Delta Academy of Technology and Innovation, Enspire Academy, and Ocean of Wisdom

Closed Schools: Kato Public Charter School, Lafayette Public Charter School, Link Public Schools, Rochester STEM Academy, and SAGE Academy

Never Opened Schools: Not Applicable

Schools that transferred into portfolio: Escuela Exitos

Schools that transferred out of portfolio: Not Applicable

Merged schools over the term of the review period: Not Applicable

Appendix B: Evaluation Methodology

Venn Education (Venn) is committed to ensuring inter-rater reliability and consistency across all Minnesota Authorizer Performance Evaluation System (MAPES) reports. In order to achieve this, Venn adopts the following methodology.

- Venn assigned each authorizer a four-person evaluation team that includes a team lead, team member, quality editor, and project manager.
- All evaluators participate in training with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) during which they review each performance measure, including measure criteria. During training, Venn and MDE norm around ratings, evidence, and report language.
- The team lead and team writer review all submitted documents and rate the evidence submitted by the authorizer, collected by Venn, and provided by MDE.
- The Venn evaluation teams participate in a pre-interview call. During this call, the team comes to consensus, deciding upon initial ratings. During this call, team members identify any standards for which they need additional clarification.
- Team members conduct interviews with key decision makers, governing board members, directors, coordinators, and other staff members of the authorizing organization. The interview serves as a verification/validation process of the measures of an authorizer's MAPES document submission and is not stand-alone evidence. Following the interview, evaluators may ask for additional documentation to be submitted by the authorizer.
- Team members conduct interviews with key decision makers, governing board members, directors, coordinators, and other staff members of charter school organizations to clarify authorizer performance and review data submitted by authorizers and MDE. The interview serves as a verification/validation process of the measures of an authorizer's MAPES document submission and is not stand-alone evidence.
- Team members review interview responses and any additional document submissions in alignment with the MAPES rubric and, if applicable, revise their initial ratings.
- Team members participate in a consensus call during which they finalize their ratings.
- Draft reports are completed and reviewed by a Venn content editor. The content editor reviews measure criteria, ratings and evidentiary alignment with performance measures in the MAPES rubric within each individual report to ensure consistency of ratings across all reports and across all cohorts of authorizers.
- The Venn project manager reviews all reports to ensure consistency of ratings and sufficiency of evidence.
- Draft performance reports are submitted to MDE to conduct a factual review.
- MDE offers authorizers an opportunity to review draft performance reports and submit additional documentation. Authorizers may submit a response identifying and explaining any errors or inaccuracies.

- Venn evaluators review the response submitted by the authorizer and any accompanying documentation. Based on the authorizer's submissions, they consider whether additional evidence impacts the ratings identified in the draft report and make applicable revisions.
- Evaluators finalize the MAPES performance reports and submit them to the Venn project manager.
- The Venn project manager reviews all finalized performance reports.
- Final performance reports are submitted to MDE for review, dissemination and publication.

Portfolio Information

General Charter School Portfolio Data (as of June 30, 2025)

Preoperational Charter Schools in Authorizer's Portfolio

Name of Charter School	Charter School Local Educational Agency (LEA) Number (if assigned)	Charter Schools Program (CSP) Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Approved to Serve	Projected Enrollment when Fully Enrolled	Proposed Location	Proposed Opening Date
Enter name of charter school	Enter LEA number	Enter: Yes or No	Enter grade levels approved	Enter projected enrollment number	Enter proposed location	Enter proposed opening date in MM/DD/YYYY format
Enlighten Academy Charter School (in process of name change to Horizon Science Academy – St. Paul)	4281	Yes	PK-5	276 (year 8), opening with 90	St. Paul	09/02/2025
Delta Academy of Technology & Innovation (formerly Irrawaddy Academy)	4304	No	PK-12	520 (year 13), opening with 120	St. Paul	09/02/2025
Ocean of Wisdom Charter School	4306	No	K-8	360 (year 9), opening with 150	Columbia Heights	09/02/2025

Name of Charter School	Charter School Local Educational Agency (LEA) Number (if assigned)	Charter Schools Program (CSP) Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Approved to Serve	Projected Enrollment when Fully Enrolled	Proposed Location	Proposed Opening Date
Freedom Academy of Leadership and Arts	In process of receiving charter number.	No	PK-12	520 (year 15), opening with 70	Saint Cloud	09/02/2025

Operational Charter Schools in Authorizer's Portfolio

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2025	Location
Enter name of charter school	Enter LEA number	Enter: Yes or No	Enter grade levels served	Enter location of school site(s)
Achieve Language Academy	4018-07-010	Yes	PK-8	2169 Stillwater Avenue E, Saint Paul, MN 55119
Agamim Classical Academy	4220-07-010	Yes	KG-8	5300 France Avenue S, Edina, MN 55410
Aspire Academy Elementary	4280-07-010	Yes	KG-5	1210 Shakopee Town Square, Shakopee, MN 55379
Aspire Academy Middle School	4280-07-020	Yes	6-8	1210 Shakopee Town Square, Shakopee, MN 55379
Avalon School	4075-07-010	Yes	9-12	700 Glendale Street, Saint Paul, MN 55114
Avalon Middle School	4075-07-020	Yes	6-8	700 Glendale Street, Saint Paul, MN 55114
Avalon Online School	4075-07-040	Yes	8-12	700 Glendale Street, Saint Paul, MN 55114

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2025	Location
Bultum Academy	4295-07-010	Yes	PK-7	1555 40th Ave NE, Columbia Heights, MN 55421
Discovery Charter Elementary School	4221-07-010	Yes	KG-8	4100 East 66th Street Ste 2, Inver Grove Heights, MN 55076
Escuela Exitos	4283-07-010	Yes	KG-8	4741 Zealand Ave N, New Hope, MN 55428-4533
Great Oaks Academy School of Grammar	4268-07-010	Yes	KG-5	6300 212TH ST W, Farmington, MN 55024
Great Oaks Academy School of Logic	4268-07-020	Yes	5-8	3560 Blue Cross Rd, Eagan, MN 55121
Great River School	4105-07-010	Yes	7-12	1326 Energy Park Dr, Saint Paul, MN 55108
Great River Elementary School	4105-07-020	Yes	1-6	1326 Energy Park Dr, Saint Paul, MN 55108
Hmong College Preparatory Academy ES	4103-07-010	Yes	K-5	1515 Brewster St, Saint Paul, MN 55108
Hmong College Preparatory Academy MS	4103-07-020	Yes	6-8	1515 Brewster St, Saint Paul, MN 55108
Hmong College Preparatory Academy HS	4103-07-030	Yes	9-12	1515 Brewster St, Saint Paul, MN 55108
Innovation Science and Technology Academy Elementary	4282-07-010	Yes	PK-5	3397 Coon Rapids Blvd, Coon Rapids, MN 55433

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2025	Location
Innovation Science and Technology Academy Middle School	4282-07-020	Yes	6-8	3397 Coon Rapids Blvd, Coon Rapids, MN 55433
Kato Public Charter School	4066-07-010	Yes	6-12	110 N 6th St, Mankato, MN 56001
Lionsgate Academy - Minnetonka	4183-07-010	Yes	7-12	5605 Green Circle Drive, Minnetonka, MN 55343
Lionsgate Academy AIM	4183-07-030	Yes	12	2342 Helen Street, North Saint Paul, MN 55109
Lionsgate Academy – Lynx Program	4183-07-040	Yes	7-12	599 Cardigan Road, Shoreview, MN 55126
Lionsgate Academy-Shoreview	4183-07-050	Yes	7-12	599 Cardigan Road, Shoreview, MN 55126
Nerstrand Charter School	4055-07-010	Yes	KG-5	205 S 2nd St, Nerstrand, MN 55053
New Century Academy	4093-07-010	Yes	6-12	950 School Road SW, Hutchinson, MN 55350
New City School	4089-07-020	Yes	KG-8	1500 6th St NE, Minneapolis, MN, 55413
North Metro Flex Academy	4243-07-010	Yes	KG-6	2350 Helen Street, North Saint Paul, MN 55109
North Metro Flex Middle School	4243-07-020	Yes	7-8	2350 Helen Street, North Saint Paul, MN 55109
Quantum STEAM Academy Elementary School	4269-07-010	Yes	PK-4	497 Humboldt Ave, Saint Paul, MN 55107

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2025	Location
Quantum STEAM Academy Middle School	4269-07-020	Yes	5-8	497 Humboldt Ave, Saint Paul, MN 55107
Saint Cloud Math and Science Academy Charter School	4223-07-010	Yes	KG-5	1025 18th St N, Saint Cloud, MN 56303
St. Cloud Math & Science Academy Middle School	4223-07-020	Yes	6-8	1025 18th St N, Saint Cloud, MN 56303
Sejong Academy Lower School	4215-07-010	Yes	PK-5	2410 Stillwater Rd E, St. Paul, MN 55119
Sejong Academy Upper School	4215-07-020	Yes	6-12	2410 Stillwater Rd E, St. Paul, MN 55119
Star of the North Academy - East Bethel Campus	4224-07-010	Yes	KG-8	1562 Viking Blvd, East Bethel, MN 55011
Star of the North Academy - Coon Rapids Campus	4224-07-020	Yes	KG-8	1313 Coon Rapids Blvd NW Coon Rapids, MN 55433
STEAM Academy Charter School	4270-07-010	Yes	KG-6	4100 66th St E, Inver Grove Heights, MN 55076
Surad Academy Elementary	4301-07-010	No – MDE did not administer the grant.	KG-6	128 8th Ave NW, Faribault, MN 55021
TEAM Academy	4127-07-010	Yes	KG-6	220 17th Avenue NE, Waseca, MN 56093
Universal Academy Elementary	4225-07-010	Yes	PK-6	2919 26th Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55406
Universal Academy Middle/High	4225-07-020	Yes	6-11	2919 26th Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55406
Universal Academy South Elementary	4225-07-030	Yes	K-6	600 Travelers Trail W Burnsville, MN 55337

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2025	Location
Universal Academy South Middle/High	4225-07-040	Yes	7	600 Travelers Trail W Burnsville, MN 55337
Urban Academy	4088-07-010	Yes	PK-8	1668 Montreal Ave, Saint Paul, MN 55116

MDE Officially Recognized Early Learning Programs at Charter Schools in Authorizer's Portfolio

Name of Charter School	Officially Recognized Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening Program	Officially Recognized Instructional Preschool Program to provide early childhood education and preparation for transition to kindergarten for children ages three through five	Officially Recognized Instructional Prekindergarten Program for four-year-olds to prepare children for entry into kindergarten the following year
Enter name of charter school	Enter: Yes, or No	Enter: Yes, or No	Enter: Yes, or No
Achieve Language Academy	Yes	No	Yes
Sejong Academy	No	No	Yes
Universal Academy	No	No	Yes
Urban Academy	No	No	Yes
Innovation Academy	No	No	Yes
Bultum Academy	No	No	Yes
TEAM Academy*	No	No	Yes
Quantum STEAM Academy	No	No	Yes

Name of Charter School	Officially Recognized Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening Program	Officially Recognized Instructional Preschool Program to provide early childhood education and preparation for transition to kindergarten for children ages three through five	Officially Recognized Instructional Prekindergarten Program for four-year-olds to prepare children for entry into kindergarten the following year
STEAM Academy*	No	No	Yes
Aspire Academy*	No	No	Yes
Surad Academy*	No	No	Yes
*PK Instructional Program was not yet operational.			

Charter School Portfolio Activity in FY 2025

Did any charter schools leave your organization's portfolio and transfer to another authorizer during or at the end of the year?

___Yes

___X No

If yes, complete the table below for each applicable school.

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	New Authorizing Organization	Effective Date of Transfer
Enter name of charter school	Enter LEA number	Enter new authorizing organization	Enter date of transfer in MM/DD/YYYY format

Did your organization terminate or revoke the charter contract for any charter school before the end of the contract term?

____Yes

___X No

If yes, complete the table below for each applicable school.

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	Reason(s) for Contract Termination	Effective Date of Contract Termination
Enter name of charter school	Enter LEA number	Enter reason(s) for contract termination	Enter effective date of contract termination in MM/DD/YYYY format

Did any charter schools voluntarily close (i.e., closure was initiated by the school) during or at the end of the year?

___Yes

___X No

If yes, complete the table below for each applicable school.

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	Reason(s) for Closure	Effective Date of Closure
Enter name of charter school	Enter LEA number	Enter reason(s) for closure	Enter effective date of closure in MM/DD/YYYY format

Charter School Portfolio Performance

Present outcome data regarding key academic performance indicators your organization used when evaluating your organization's portfolio of charter schools. Provide a narrative analysis of this data, indicating strengths and areas for growth.

The vision of NEO is to be a leading Minnesota Authorizer of innovative, diverse, and effective charter schools. NEO monitors the collective enrollment and demographic information of the schools authorized by NEO to ensure that NEO continues to reach out to diverse communities that are currently underserved by the statewide education system as evident by large academic and opportunity gaps statewide.

The schools that NEO authorized in 2024-2025 continue to serve increasingly diverse families and students with innovative programs.

For example, the percent of English learners collectively served by schools authorized by NEO who took state assessments increased from 18% in 2015 to 37% in 2025.

For reference, the percent of all English learners statewide who took state tests in 2025 was only 10%.

Student Population: Percent of All Students Tested in Schools Authorized by NEO

	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	'24	'25
English Learners	18%	24%	26%	31%	29%	N/A	34%	29%	32%	37%	37%
Students Receiving Special Education Services	17%	17%	17%	18%	20%	N/A	20%	19%	19%	18%	18%
Students Meeting State Guidelines for Free/Reduced Meals	53%	54%	56%	54%	55%	N/A	58%	55%	64%	70%	71%

Student Population: Percent of All Students Tested in All MN Public Schools

	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	'24	'25
English Learners	8%	8%	8%	9%	8%	N/A	7%	9%	9%	10%	10%
Students Receiving Special Education Services	13%	14%	15%	14%	15%	N/A	15%	17%	16%	17%	19%
Students Meeting State Guidelines for Free/Reduced Meals	39%	38%	38%	37%	38%	N/A	32%	32%	43%	43%	40%

Data Source: Minnesota Department of Education School Report Card

The schools authorized by NEO continue to serve families and students with diverse needs for special education and diverse ancestry and ethnic origins as broadly categorized by the Minnesota Department of Education. They offer innovative and specialized programming including quality programming for students on the autism spectrum and heritage programming to support the preservation of language and culture.

Therefore, the racial composition and ethnicity of students in the schools authorized by NEO continues to remain diverse.

Students Served by Schools NEO Authorizes

Year	American Indian/Alaskan Native	Asian/Pacific Islander	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Black, not of Hispanic origin	Two or More Races	White, not of Hispanic origin
2015	0.3%	15%	N/A	9%	25%	N/A	49%
2016	1%	13%	N/A	8%	25%	N/A	45%
2017	1%	14%	N/A	10%	24%	N/A	46%
2018	1%	17%	N/A	10%	27%	3%	42%
2019	1%	16%	N/A	11%	27%	4%	41%
2020	1%	17%	0.2%	11%	26%	5%	40%
2021	1%	18%	0.2%	11%	28%	5%	38%
2022	1%	18%	0.1%	11%	28%	5%	37%
2023	1%	39%	0	8%	23%	4%	25%
2024	1%	38%	0.05%	8%	25%	4%	25%
2025	1%	35%	0.03%	8%	27%	4%	25%

Data Source: Minnesota Department of Education Data and Analytics

Academic Performance Indicator: All children are ready for school.

A key academic performance indicator that NEO has monitored is that all children are ready for school.

Schools that are authorized by NEO continued to implement a Prekindergarten Instructional Program that have the capacity and resources to provide high quality Prekindergarten instruction. The schools continued to work with NEO to gain approval from the Minnesota Department of Education and successfully implement a Prekindergarten Instructional Program to help ensure that all children are ready for school.

In 2024-25, 14 of the 24 elementary schools authorized by NEO (Achieve Language Academy, Sejong Academy of Minnesota, Universal Academy, Urban Academy Charter School, Bultum Academy, Innovation Academy, Quantum STEAM Academy, STEAM Academy, Great Oaks Academy, Aspire Academy, Surad Academy, Enlighten Academy, TEAM Academy, and Delta Academy, formerly Irrawaddy Academy) were authorized to provide a Prekindergarten Instructional Program.

Of those authorized to have a Prekindergarten Instructional Program, 6 schools provided one.

NEO facilitated sharing of ideas and resources among Prekindergarten Instructional Programs through learning walks and verified compliance with laws and regulations at site visits.

The number of schools authorized by NEO with a Prekindergarten Instructional Program continued to increase.

Years	NEO Authorized Schools Adding Prekindergarten Instructional Programs
2014	Achieve Language Academy
2015	Lafayette Charter School (closed)
2016	Sejong Academy of Minnesota
2017	Universal Academy, Urban Academy Charter School
2018	Quantum STEAM Academy, STEAM Academy, Great Oaks Academy
2019	Innovation Academy, Enlighten Academy, Aspire Academy
2022	Bultum Academy
2023	Surad Academy
2024	Delta Academy, TEAM Academy
2025	N/A
2014-2024	14 Total Schools Authorized to Provide Prekindergarten Instructional Programs

NEO continued to contract with an expert in program oversight and early childhood education to assist with the oversight of schools that have Prekindergarten Instructional Programs. NEO developed a Prekindergarten Instructional Program evaluation tool that can be used by school leadership and NEO to evaluate the Prekindergarten Instructional Program to identify successful practices and facilitate sharing of them.

Academic Performance Indicator 2: All racial and economic achievement gaps between students are closed.

NEO evaluated the academic performance of Focus Groups including “Special Education” (students receiving special education services), “English Learner” (multilingual learners learning English language), and “Free/Reduced-Price Meals” (students from households with an income that meets guidelines for free and reduced school meals) in terms of progress in closing economic and other opportunity/achievement gaps. The goals are to exceed the statewide and resident district averages and/or improve as measured by state tests.

Reading

The percent of students by Focus Group who scored proficient on All State Reading Accountability Assessments exceeded the state in all years for the Focus Group ‘Multilingual English Learners’ (multi-lingual learners learning English language).

The results increased in 2025 as measured by the percent of students who scored proficient in the Focus Group, ‘Special Education’ and remained the same for the Focus Group ‘Free/Reduced Price Meals’.

Note that due to the pandemic, there are no results for 2019-20. In the 2021 school year, the student assessment results decreased as measured by the percent scoring proficient, due to distance learning because students could not attend school in person.

State Accountability Reading Test Results (Percent Proficient)

Year	Focus Group: Multilingual English Learner		Focus Group: Special Education		Focus Group: Free/Reduced-Price Meals	
	NEO Authorized Schools	STATE	NEO Authorized Schools	STATE	NEO Authorized Schools	STATE
2015-	28%	15%	32%	29%	41%	40%
2020	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2021	15%	9%	23%	26%	27%	32%
2022	22%	12%	27%	26%	33%	32%
2023	20%	12%	28%	26%	33%	34%
2024	18% (15% with inclusion of large transfer school)	10%	27% (23% with inclusion of large transfer school)	26%	34% (30% with inclusion of large transfer school)	33%
2025	15%	11%	25%	25%	30%	33%
Analysis	<u>English Learner Focus Group</u> The results remained the same in 2025. In all years measured, schools authorized by NEO collectively outperformed the state as measured by the percent of students who scored proficient in the Focus Group, ‘English Learner’.					
	<u>Special Education Focus Group</u> The results increased from 23% to 25% in 2025 as measured by the percent of students who scored proficient in the Focus Group, ‘Special Education’.					

	Free/Reduced-Price Meals Focus Group The results remained the same in 2025 as measured by the percent of students who scored proficient in the Focus Group, 'Free/Reduced-Price Meals'.

Data Source: MDE de-identified, student-level data and MDE report card.

Each school that NEO authorizes has a Performance Framework that includes measures for proficiency of Focus Groups in reading.

NEO met with the leaders of authorized schools to examine the school performance and identify successful practices as well as learn ways that the school is working to improve results.

NEO connected school leaders based on areas of strengths and needs to help facilitate sharing of successful practices.

NEO followed up with the schools as available to plan for ways to facilitate sharing of the successful practices.

Several schools that NEO authorizes significantly improved the reading scores of different Focus Groups and/or significantly outperformed the statewide average for the respective Focus Groups in 2025, as measured by the percent of students meeting grade level standards (scoring meets or exceeds on the state reading assessments).

For example (of the schools whose participation rate in state assessment was more than 90%),

- Achieve Language Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of students from low-income households from 17% to 22% to 25%.
- Agamim Classical Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language from 17% to 21%, outperforming the statewide average of 11%, post-pandemic.
- Agamim Classical Academy achieved 50% of students in the focus group of students receiving special education services scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 25%, post-pandemic.
- Agamim Classical Academy achieved 34% of students in the focus group of students from low-income households scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 33%, post-pandemic.
- Bultum Academy achieved 27% of students in the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 11%, post-pandemic.
- Bultum Academy achieved 36% of students in the focus group of students from low-income households scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 33%, post-pandemic.
- Great Oaks Academy achieved 33% of students in the focus group of students receiving special education services scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 25%, post-pandemic.
- Great Oaks Academy achieved 53% of students in the focus group of students from low-income households scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 33%, post-pandemic.
- Great River School achieved 42% of students in the focus group of students receiving special education services scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 25%, post-pandemic.
- Great River School achieved 56% of students in the focus group of students from low-income households scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 33%, post-pandemic.
- Innovation Science and Technology Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language from 20% to 27%, outperforming the statewide average of 11%, post-pandemic.
- Nerstrand Elementary School achieved 40% of students in the focus group of students receiving special education services scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 25%, post-pandemic.

- Nerstrand Elementary School achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of students from low-income households from 33% to 43% to 50%, outperforming the statewide average of 33%, post-pandemic.
- New Century Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of students receiving special education services from 17% to 18% to 27% outperforming the statewide average of 25%, post-pandemic.
- North Metro Flex Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of students receiving special education services from 3% to 10% to 29% outperforming the statewide average of 25%, post-pandemic.
- Sejong Academy achieved 20% of students in the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 11%, post-pandemic.
- Sejong Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of students from low-income households from 30% to 35%, outperforming the statewide average of 33%, post-pandemic.
- St. Cloud Math and Science Academy achieved 15% of students in the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 11%, post-pandemic.
- St. Cloud Math and Science Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of students receiving special education services from 14% to 19% to 24%.
- Star of the North Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language from 9% to 10% to 23%, outperforming the statewide average of 11%, post-pandemic.
- Star of the North Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of students receiving special education services from 8% to 15% to 23%.
- Star of the North Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of students from low-income households from 28% to 34%, outperforming the statewide average of 33%, post-pandemic.
- Surad Academy achieved 29% of students in the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 11%, post-pandemic.
- Surad Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of students from low-income households from 33% to 39%, outperforming the statewide average of 33%, post-pandemic.
- TEAM Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of students receiving special education services from 17% to 30% outperforming the statewide average of 25%, post-pandemic.
- Urban Academy achieved 20% of students in the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 11%, post-pandemic.
- Urban Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of students receiving special education services from 16% to 17% to 22%.
- Urban Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of students from low-income households from 37% to 38%, outperforming the statewide average of 33%, post-pandemic.

Some of the leaders from these schools shared effective practices during 2024-2025, including at the 2024 Fall and 2025 Spring Celebration of Leading and Learning.

Mathematics

The percent of students by Focus Group who scored proficient on All State Math Accountability Assessments met or exceeded the state in all years except for 2021 for the Focus Group, 'Multilingual English Learners'.

The results increased in 2025 as measured by the percent of students who scored proficient in all Focus Groups – 'Multilingual English Learner', 'Special Education', and in the Focus Group 'Free/Reduced Price Meals'.

Note that due to the pandemic, there are no results for 2019-20. In the 2021 school year, the student assessment results decreased as measured by the percent scoring proficient, due to distance learning because students could not attend school in person.

MCA Math Results (Percent Proficient)

Year	Focus Group: Multilingual English Learner		Focus Group: Special Education		Focus Group: Free/Reduced-Price MCA Math Results (Percent Proficient) Meals	
	NEO Authorized Schools	STATE	NEO Authorized Schools	STATE	NEO Authorized Schools	STATE
2015-	29%	18%	21%	29%	34%	38%
2020	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2021	8%	9%	12%	23%	15%	23%
2022	13%	12%	16%	24%	19%	24%
2023	15%	13%	17%	25%	22%	27%
2024	16% (13% with addition of large new transfer)	13%	17% (15% with addition of large new transfer)	25%	23% (21% with addition of large new transfer)	28%
2025	15%	13%	16%	25%	22%	27%

Analysis	<u>English Learner Focus Group</u> The results increased from 13% to 15% in 2025 as measured by the percent of students who scored proficient in the Focus Group, 'English Learner'.
	<u>Special Education Focus Group</u> The results increased from 15% to 16% in 2025 as measured by the percent of students who scored proficient in the Focus Group, 'Special Education'.
	<u>Free/Reduced Price Meals Focus Group</u> The results increased from 21% to 22% in 2025 as measured by the percent of students who scored proficient in the Focus Group, 'Free/Reduced-Price Meals'.

Data Source: MDE de-identified, student-level data and MDE report card.

Each school that NEO authorizes has a Performance Framework that includes measures for proficiency of Focus Groups in math.

NEO met with the leaders of authorized schools to examine the school performance and identify successful practices as well as learn ways that the school is working to improve results.

NEO connected school leaders based on areas of strengths and needs to help facilitate sharing of successful practices.

Several schools that NEO authorizes significantly improved the math scores of different Focus Groups and/or significantly outperformed the statewide average for the respective Focus Groups in 2025, as measured by the percent of students meeting grade level standards (scoring meets or exceeds on the state reading assessments).

NEO followed up with these schools based on their availability to plan for ways to facilitate sharing of the successful practices.

For example (of the schools whose participation rate in state assessment was more than 90%),

- Agamim Classical Academy achieved 20% of students in the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 13%.
- Agamim Classical Academy achieved 35% of students in the focus group of students receiving special education services scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 25%.
- Bultum Academy achieved 26% of students in the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 13%.
- Bultum Academy achieved 30% of students in the focus group of students from low-income households scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 27%.
- Great Oaks Academy achieved 30% of students in the focus group of students receiving special education services scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 25%.
- Great Oaks Academy achieved 44% of students in the focus group of students from low-income households scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 27%.
- Nerstrand Elementary School achieved 47% of students in the focus group of students receiving special education services scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 25%.
- Nerstrand Elementary School achieved 50% of students in the focus group of students from low-income households scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 27%.
- Innovation Science and Technology Academy achieved an increase in math proficiency for the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language from 10% to 17% to 33%, outperforming the statewide average of 13%.
- North Metro Flex Academy achieved an increase in math proficiency for the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language from 4% to 15%, outperforming the statewide average of 13%.
- North Metro Flex Academy achieved an increase in math proficiency for the focus group of students receiving special education services from 3% to 14%.
- Sejong Academy achieved an increase in math proficiency for the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language from 18% to 19% to 20%, outperforming the statewide average of 13%.
- St. Cloud Math and Science Academy achieved 16% of students in the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 13%.
- Star of the North Academy achieved 17% of students in the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 13%.
- Surad Academy achieved 38% of students in the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 13%.

- Surad Academy achieved an increase in math proficiency for the focus group of students from low-income households from 40% to 42% outperforming the statewide average of 27%.
- TEAM Academy achieved an increase in math proficiency for the focus group of students receiving special education services from 15% to 17% to 24%.
- Urban Academy achieved an increase in math proficiency for the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language from 17% to 26% to 30%, outperforming the statewide average of 13%.
- Urban Academy achieved an increase in math proficiency for the focus group of students from low-income households from 25% to 31% to 35%, outperforming the statewide average of 27%.

Leaders from some of these schools shared effective practices during 2024-2025, including at the 2024 Fall and 2025 Spring Celebration of Leading and Learning.

Academic Performance Indicator: All students are ready for career and college.

Based on the statewide assessment results, the mandated distance learning during the pandemic had a more severe negative impact in math and for Focus Groups that include students receiving special education services, students from low-income households, and students who are multilingual learners learning English language.

NEO also examined the percent of all students in schools that NEO authorizes that score proficient in reading and math, with the goal of exceeding the statewide and resident district proficiency rates.

	All Students: Reading Percent Proficient		**All Students: Math Percent Proficient**	
	NEO Authorized Schools	STATE	NEO Authorized Schools	STATE
2014	51%	60%	42%	61%
2015	54%	61%	43%	62%
2016	55%	61%	42%	62%
2017	53%	61%	40%	61%
2018	52%	61%	44%	60%
2019	48%	60%	40%	56%
2020	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2021	37%	53%	23%	44%
2022	45%	52%	28%	46%
2023	44% (excluding large transfer school) 37% (including large transfer school)	50%	30% (excluding large transfer school) 25% (including large transfer school)	46%
2024	42% (excluding large transfer school) 36% (including large transfer school)	50%	30% (excluding large transfer school) 26% (including large transfer school)	46%
2025	37%	50%	27%	45%
Analysis	Schools authorized by NEO improved but did not yet collectively outperform the state as measured by the percent of students who scored proficient in reading and math.			

Data Source: MDE de-identified, student-level data and MDE report card.

Each school that NEO authorizes has a Performance Framework that includes the charter contract goals and measures for reading proficiency.

NEO met with the leaders of authorized schools to examine the school performance and identify successful practices as well as learn ways that the school is working to improve results.

NEO connected school leaders based on areas of strengths and needs to help facilitate sharing of successful practices.

NEO followed up with the schools based on their availability to plan for ways to facilitate sharing of the successful practices.

Several schools that NEO authorizes outperformed the statewide average and/or improved reading proficiency by at least 10 percentage points as measured by the percent of students who scored “meets” or “exceeds” on the state reading assessments.

For example (of the schools whose participation rate in state assessment was more than 90%),

- Agamim Classical Academy achieved 53% of students scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 50%.
- Avalon School achieved 54% of students scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 50%.
- Great Oaks Academy achieved 63% of students scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 50%.
- Great River School achieved 68% of students scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 50%.
- Nerstrand Elementary School achieved an increase in reading proficiency from 45% to 55% to 57%, outperforming the statewide average of 46%.

In addition, several schools that NEO authorizes outperformed the statewide average and/or improved math proficiency by at least 10 percentage points as measured by the percent of students who scored “meets” or “exceeds” on the state math assessments.

For example (of the schools whose participation rate in state assessment was more than 90%),

- Agamim Classical Academy achieved 49% of students scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 46%.
- Great Oaks Academy achieved 60% of students scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 46%.
- Nerstrand Elementary School achieved 59% of students scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 46%.

NEO followed up with these schools based on their availability to facilitate sharing of the successful practices.

Academic Performance Indicator: All students graduate from high school.

Note that 2024 is the most current data available.

Schools authorized by NEO have collectively demonstrated improvement in graduation rates since the baseline year of 2013. All graduation cohorts met the goal of a 75% graduation rate set by NEO for 2025.

4-year Graduation Rate (Due to state reporting, graduation data lags one year)

Year	School Authorized by NEO	State
Baseline 2013	40%	80%
2014	43%	81%
2015	46%	82%
2016	53%	83%
2017	47%	83%
2018	62%	83%
2019	59%	84%
2020	63%	84%
2021	59%	83%
2022	64%	84%
2023	75%	83%
2024	79%	84%
Analysis:	From the baseline year rate of 40% in 2013, the 4-year graduation rate increased in 2024 to 79%. Schools authorized by NEO improved the 4-year graduation rate but are not yet exceeding the statewide average.	

5-year Graduation Rate (Due to state reporting, graduation data lags one year)

Year	School Authorized by NEO	State
Baseline 2013	45%	82%
2014	48%	84%
2015	51%	84%
2016	53%	85%
2017	60%	86%
2018	67%	86%
2019	75%	86%
2020	68%	87%
2021	69%	87%
2022	74%	87%
2023	84%	86%
2024	83%	87%
Analysis:	From the baseline year rate of 45% in 2013, the 5-year graduation rate increased in 2024 to 83%. Schools authorized by NEO are not yet exceeding the statewide average.	

6-Year Cohort (Due to state reporting, graduation data lags one year)

Year	School Authorized by NEO	State
2013	49%	82%
2014	52%	83%
2015	52%	85%
2016	56%	86%
2017	59%	86%
2018	78%	87%
2019	70%	87%
2020	77%	88%
2021	72%	88%
2022	75%	88%
2023	85%	88%
2024	86%	87%
Analysis:	From the baseline year rate of 49% in 2013, the 6-year graduation rate increased in 2024 to 86%. Schools authorized by NEO improved the 6-year graduate rate but are not yet exceeding the statewide average.	

7-Year Cohort (Due to state reporting, graduation data lags one year)

Year	School Authorized by NEO	State
2019	81%	88%
2020	74%	88%
2021	80%	89%
2022	77%	89%
2023	87%	89%
2024	90%	86%
Analysis:	MDE began calculating 7-year graduation rates in 2020. From the baseline year rate of 2019, the 7-year graduation rate increased in 2024 to 90%. Schools authorized by NEO exceeded the statewide 7-year graduation rate.	

Data Source: Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Report Card

Each high school that NEO authorizes has a Performance Framework that includes measures for graduation. Schools that did not meet the satisfactory level of results at any point during the contract term, met more often with NEO to examine the school performance and actions that the school has been taking to improve the results. NEO also identified areas where schools met the exemplary level of results. NEO connected school leaders based on areas of strengths and relative weakness to help facilitate sharing of successful practices and support school success.

Operational Performance

Present outcome data regarding key operational performance indicators your organization used when evaluating your organization's portfolio of charter schools. Provide a narrative analysis of this data, indicating strengths and areas for growth.

Climate Performance Indicator: Attendance Rates.

Note that 2024 is the most current available data.

Percent of Students Attending More than 90% of the Time Enrolled in Schools Authorized by NEO

Group	Year	NEO Attendance Rate	Statewide
All	2021	N/A	N/A
All	2022	76%	70%
All	2023	77% (72% including large transfer school)	75%
All	2024	79%	76%

Data Source: Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Report Card

Results. Note that attendance data reported by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) lags one year. Therefore, data for 2024 is the most current available data.

Collectively, the schools authorized by NEO improved the attendance rate from 2022 to 2024, exceeding the statewide results by 3 percentage points.

The consistent attendance rate is calculated by MDE as the percent of students who attend at least 90% of the total days enrolled. MDE did not report attendance results for 2021 due to the pandemic conditions.

The statewide consistent attendance rate was 76% for the 2023-2024 school year, thus, for the 2023-2024 school year, the average consistent attendance rate of the schools that NEO authorizes was 3 percentage points higher than the statewide average.

Operational Performance Indicator: Compliance with MDE Submissions.

1. 26 of 26, or 100% of operational charter schools that NEO authorizes submitted the Annual Charter School Assurances on time and accurately.
2. 26 of 26, or 100% of operational charter schools that NEO authorizes submitted the Assurance of Compliance report on time and accurately.
3. 25 of 25, or 100% of operational charter schools that NEO authorizes that were in operation the prior year submitted the CACR Report to MDE on time and accurately.
4. 26 of 26, or 100% of operational charter schools that NEO authorizes submitted the STAR Report on time and accurately.
5. 26 of 26, or 100% of operational charter schools that NEO authorizes submitted the four quarterly Seclusion Reports on time and accurately.
6. 26 of 26, or 100% of operational charter schools that NEO authorizes submitted the Physical Holding report on time and accurately.
7. 26 of 26, or 100% of operational charter schools that NEO authorizes submitted the Local Literacy Plan Submission on time and accurately.

Operational Performance Indicator: Compliance with Charter Contract and Applicable Laws.

NEO verified that schools met key compliance indicators through site visits, board meeting observations, and website and document reviews in 2024-2025.

Statutory infractions were documented in 2024-2025, and if a school was unable to correct each infraction within the period for corrective action, the school's Performance Framework rating for the indicator for Compliance/Operational Performance was adjusted at the end of the year when the Performance Framework was updated.

This may have resulted for example, in a school achieving a three-year contract term status instead of a five-year contract term status, or even the potential of a nonrenewal.

89% (24/27) were in full compliance in FY25. The 11% (3/27) that were not in compliance came into compliance after being notified and provided time for corrective action.

NEO has developed a series of minicourses to provide technical assistance to charter board members and school leaders with compliance.

NEO requested that the board members and school leaders complete training in areas of any documented infraction.

NEO monitored and evaluated compliance with applicable laws and Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) regulations and contractual requirements through site visits and school reporting, including but not limited to the following areas.

<u>Board Member Composition and Background Checks</u>

- NEO verified compliant board composition and background checks during an annual formal site visit.
- The schools authorized by NEO were able to provide evidence of compliant board member composition and up-to-date background checks.

<u>Board Training (new and ongoing)</u>

- The schools authorized by NEO were able to provide evidence of meeting charter board training requirements.

<u>School Leadership Evaluation and Professional Development Plan (as applicable)</u>

- The schools authorized by NEO were able to provide evidence of meeting requirements for leadership evaluation and professional development.

Staff and Volunteer Background Checks
- The schools authorized by NEO were able to provide evidence of staff and volunteer background checks.

Teacher Licensure
- The schools authorized by NEO were compliant with licensure requirements.

Teacher Evaluation and Peer Review Process
- The schools authorized by NEO completed a teacher evaluation and peer review process.

Alignment of Education Program to MN Academic Standards
- The schools authorized by NEO showed evidence of the processes to align curriculum of the academics to MN Academic Standards.

Nonsectarian School Facilities and Program
- The schools authorized by NEO met requirements related to nonsectarian facilities and programming.

Current Certifications/Inspections (Certificate of Occupancy, Food and Nutrition Program)
- The schools authorized by NEO met requirements for completing and posting certifications and inspections.

Safety and Security
- The schools authorized by NEO were able to provide evidence of meeting requirements related to safety and security.

NEO monitored and evaluated compliance with applicable laws and contractual requirements through board meeting observations, including but not limited to the following areas:

- Compliance with Minnesota Open Meeting Laws
- Compliance with School Bylaws

NEO monitored and evaluated compliance with applicable laws and MDE regulations and contractual requirements through website reviews, including but not limited to the following areas:

- Current Board Roster
  - The schools authorized by NEO kept their board roster updated on their websites.
- Website Requirements as Specified by MN Statutes and MDE Requirements
  - The schools authorized by NEO were compliant with website requirements.
- On-time and Accurate Submissions
  - The schools submitted documents via Epicenter, a document collection and storage system, to NEO and to MDE, on-time and accurately to assist NEO with monitoring compliance and to meet statutory requirements.

NEO monitored and evaluated compliance with applicable laws and MDE regulations and contractual requirements through document reviews, including but not limited to the following areas:

- Required Policies and Assurances
- Certificates of Insurance
- School Calendars (Instructional Days and Assessments)
- Board-approved Annual Budgets and Revisions

- Required Reports (Audit, Charter School Annual Report, Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readines Plan, Report and Summary)
- Board Meeting Materials (Including Recorded Votes, Financials and Policy Review Cycle)

Operational Performance Indicator: Mobility.

NEO had been monitoring the state reported student mobility rates to understand the mobility of students enrolling and unenrolling. Mobility rates included percent of students who transfer into the school after October 1, and the percent of students who transfer out of the school after October 1.

In the 2024-2025 school year, 95% of students remained enrolled from October 1 to the end of the school year in the schools that NEO authorizes collectively, with only 5% transferring out during the school year, compared to 95% remaining enrolled from October 1 to the end of the 2023-2024 school year.

Operational Performance Indicator: Enrollment.

Based on available data from MDE, MDE reports that enrollment in schools authorized by NEO has increased steadily over the past nine years from 2,930 in the 2014-2015 school year to 9,584 in the 2024-2025 school year.

Enrollment Trends by Year and Grade: Schools Authorized by NEO

	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	total	change
2014-15	N/A	28	29	26	27	25	27	16	19	18	20	181	189	217	2930	
2015-16	N/A	33	32	32	28	27	25	21	18	21	19	279	288	513	3689	+26%
2016-17	34	41	42	42	40	33	29	23	23	19	19	197	215	235	3834	+4%
2017-18	94	43	46	42	41	40	34	30	24	25	18	213	196	257	4242	+11%
2018-19	86	46	48	46	45	45	41	36	33	27	22	236	227	259	4739	+12%
2019-20	115	46	50	50	47	43	42	37	34	32	26	250	240	281	5013	+6%
2020-21	108	39	54	52	52	46	43	39	38	36	25	272	252	286	5196	+4%
2021-22	112	52	58	56	56	54	50	43	40	37	25	251	275	328	5713	+10%
2022-23	112	71	78	75	77	74	74	65	65	63	50	456	430	503	8465	+48%
2023-24	151	69	82	85	81	78	77	69	64	62	49	476	464	494	8788	+4%
2024-25	168	81	85	86	89	83	87	83	84	78	42	478	438	474	9584	+9%

Data Source: Minnesota Department of Education Data and Analytics

Financial Performance

Present outcome data regarding key financial performance indicators your organization used when evaluating your organization's portfolio of charter schools. Provide a narrative analysis of this data, indicating strengths and areas for growth.

NEO analyzed 14 indicators to evaluate financial sustainability and to determine finance awards.

They included:

Operational Performance Indicator: Statutory Reporting Deadlines.

1. Preliminary UFARS data was submitted to MDE by September 15.
2. Final UFARS data was submitted to MDE by November 30.
3. The current year audit was submitted to MDE and the authorizer by December 31.
4. Preliminary budgets are approved prior to July 1 of a new fiscal year.

Operational Performance Indicator: Reporting and Oversight Quality.

5. UFARS and Audit data agree (compliance table from MDE).
6. The audit is free from material and significant deficiencies—no findings in audit.
7. Financial Reports are submitted to the NEO EpiCenter in a timely manner.
8. The board conducts financial oversight (reviews a quality set of financials) at each regular meeting.

Operational Performance Indicator: Financial Sustainability.

9. A fund balance policy is used in oversight.
10. The general fund unreserved balance is at least 20% unless SPED population is 75% or greater.
11. Fund Two (2) unreserved balance is zero or positive.
12. Fund Four (4) unreserved balance is zero or positive.
13. The organization has a positive current ratio (assets to liabilities).

Operational Performance Indicator: Use of Public Funds.

14. The school properly used public funds.

NEO also used the analysis to provide feedback to schools, personalize technical assistance, and share successful practices.

Operational Performance Indicator: End of Year Fund Balances.

The end-of-year school fund balance was one of the indicators of school sustainability.

Average Fund Balance of Schools that NEO Authorizes

Year	Average Fund Balance
2015	29%
2016	32%
2017	33%
2018	31%
2019	32%
2020	28%
2021	29%
2022	30%
2023	37%
2024	38%
2025	35%

Data Sources: Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Data and Analytics

Results. The aggregate fund balance for schools that NEO authorized in 2024-25 was 35% compared to 38% in 2023-24.

All operational schools that NEO authorizes had a positive fund balance except for one school. 14 out of 26 (54%) schools that NEO authorized with financial activity had a fund balance as a percentage of annual expenditures of at least 20% in 2024-2025 compared to 48% in 2023-2024.

NEO has developed a series of courses on financial oversight and recommended that all board members and school leaders from schools with a fund balance less than 10% complete training on adopting the budget and monitoring pupil units, cash flow, and fund balance.

Operational Performance Indicator: Audit Findings.

15 out of 25 (60%) of schools authorized by NEO that were required to complete an audit in 2024-25 for the Fiscal Year ending June 2025 (FY25) had clean audits (no findings) compared to 63% the prior year.

NEO has developed a series of courses on preventing audit findings and recommended that all board members and school leaders from schools with audit findings complete training related to the findings.

In addition, NEO facilitated Performance Framework data meetings with school leaders to review financial performance in addition to performance in academics, climate, and operations/compliance. NEO and authorized schools reviewed ways to prevent audit findings.

Operational Performance Indicator: Finance Awards.

23 out of 26 of the operational schools authorized by NEO that were eligible to earn the School Finance Award, earned the School Finance Award for 2025 based on 2024-2025 financials which was the same as 2023-2024. MDE no longer awards School Finance Awards so NEO tracks the key indicators and continues to administer the awards using the consistent criteria from prior years.

NEO has developed a course on earning the MDE School Finance Award and recommended that all board members and school leaders from schools that did not earn the School Finance Award complete training related to meeting the standards for earning the School Finance Award.

Overview of Strengths and Areas of Improvement in Financial Performance Through FY2024

Financial Indicators	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	'24	'25
Total Number of Schools Including Pre-operational	19	21	23	21	26	26	28	30	31	29	29
Eligible Operational Schools Earning the MDE School Finance Award	13/18	17/19	20/21	19/21	19/20	16/20	17/21	16/23	21/27	21/27	23/26
Operating Schools in Statutory Operating Debt	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	2	1	1
Percent w/No Audit Finding	50%	68%	76%	71%	76%	59%	65%	68%	63%	63%	60%

Financial Indicators	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	'24	'25
Total Number of Schools with Financial Activity	19	21	23	21	21	21	22	27	29	27	26
Fund Balance is less than 0	0	0	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	1
Fund Balance 0 to 9.99%	4	4	5	3	4	2	2	3	6	4	3
Fund Balance 10 to 19.99	3	5	5	7	2	4	4	7	8	9	9
Fund Balance 20 to 29.99%	3	3	2	1	4	5	5	4	2	4	6
Fund Balance 30% or Greater	9	9	10	9	9	8	9	11	11	9	7

Data Sources: Minnesota Department of Education Data and Analytics and charter school audited financials.

Operational Performance Indicator: NEO Stewardship Award in Finance.

NEO awarded schools that achieve exemplary financial performance with the NEO Stewardship Award in Finance. Most criteria for the NEO Stewardship Award in Finance are taken directly from the NEO Contract and/or Minnesota Statutes. The criteria that separated out many of the schools that reach higher levels of achievement are:

1. The Board of Directors demonstrates consistent financial oversight through use of quality financials including balance sheet, transaction register, budget vs. actual revenues and expenses including budgeted and current projected enrollment (ADM) assumptions, and cash flow projections.
2. Schools must be free from all audit findings (significant and material).
3. The general fund unreserved balance was at or above 20%.
4. The Board of Directors demonstrates consistent financial oversight through use of a fund balance policy.

Nine of 26 eligible schools met the criteria for earning the NEO Stewardship Award in Finance in 2024-2025 based on 2023-2024 financials, compared to nine of 27 in 2023-2024.

The 9 schools that earned the NEO Stewardship Award in Finance for 2023-2024 were Achieve Language Academy, Avalon Charter School, Great Oaks Academy, Hmong College Prep Academy, Nerstrand Elementary, Quantum STEAM Academy, Saint Cloud Math and Science Academy, STEAM Academy, and Urban Academy.

Other Performance (if applicable)

Present outcome data regarding other key performance indicators your organization used when evaluating your organization's portfolio of charter schools. Provide a narrative analysis of this data, indicating strengths and areas for growth.

Minnesota's High-Quality Charter School (HQCS) designation, used for federal grants like Charter School Program (CSP), is awarded using a rigorous methodology that measures strong academic results (growth, achievement, closing gaps), financial/operational stability, compliance, and effective practices like high attendance, robust test participation (90%+), and success for all student focus groups, with specific criteria outlined in MDE guidance documents for eligibility and expansion.

Fifteen charter schools were identified by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) high-quality charter school methodology as "High Quality Charter Schools" in 2025. Three of the fifteen charter schools are authorized by Novation Education Opportunities (NEO): Sejong Academy, Saint Cloud Math and Science Academy, and Urban Academy.

In addition, the MDE high-quality charter school methodology identified additional notable achievements of charter schools authorized by NEO.

<u>Reading</u>

- Surad Academy exceeded the state comparison school in reading growth by 29 percentage points, the most of any charter school in Minnesota, in only their second year of operation.
- Surad Academy exceeded the state comparison school in reading achievement by 16 percentage points.
- Universal Academy exceeded the state comparison school in reading achievement by 19.5 percentage points.
- Urban Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 16 percentage points in reading growth.
- Urban Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 14 percentage points in reading achievement.
- Avalon School exceeded the state comparison school by 16 percentage points in reading achievement.
- Sejong Academy of Minnesota exceeded the state comparison school by 15 percentage points in reading growth.
- Sejong Academy of Minnesota exceeded the state comparison school by 10 percentage points in reading achievement.
- Bultum Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 14 percentage points in reading achievement.
- Saint Cloud Math and Science Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 13.5 percentage points.
- Saint Cloud Math and Science Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 11 percentage points in reading achievement.
- Quantum STEAM Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 13 percentage points in reading achievement.

- Agamim Classical Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 9.5 percentage points in reading achievement.
- Great River School exceeded the state comparison school by 9 percentage points in reading achievement.
- Lionsgate Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 8 percentage points in reading achievement.
- Aspire Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 8 percentage points.
- Many other schools that NEO authorizes exceeded the state comparison schools in reading: Discovery Charter School, New City School, Bultum Academy, Avalon School, Escuela Exitos Charter School, Great River School, Star of the North Academy, North Metro Flex Academy, Lionsgate Academy, Innovation Science and Technology Academy, and Great Oaks Academy.

Math

- Surad Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 18 percentage points in math achievement.
- Universal Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 15 percentage points in math growth.
- Universal Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 10 percentage points in math achievement.
- Urban Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 12 percentage points in math growth.
- Agamim Classical Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 10 percentage points in math achievement.
- Saint Cloud Math and Science Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 9 percentage points in math growth.
- Saint Cloud Math and Science Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 9 percentage points in math achievement.
- Bultum Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 9 percentage points in math growth.
- Sejong Academy, Quantum STEAM Academy and Star of the North Academy also exceeded the state comparison schools in math.

Science

- Bultum Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 28 percentage points in science achievement.
- Surad Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 23 percentage points in science achievement.
- Lionsgate Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 23 percentage points in science achievement.
- Universal Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 11 percentage points in science achievement.
- Sejong Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 10 percentage points in science achievement.
- Agamim Classical Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 9 percentage points in science achievement.
- Saint Cloud Math and Science Academy exceeded the state comparison school by 9 percentage points in science achievement.
- Aspire Academy, Avalon School, Quantum STEAM Academy, and Urban Academy also exceeded the state comparison schools in science.

Gratitude

We express our gratitude to the boards, leaders, business managers, and other staff, as well as the families and students that make up the community of each authorized school for the privilege to work with you to support school success and improve student learning!

In addition, we express our gratitude to the Advisors (independent contractors), who work as part of the team to support school success and improve student learning with their experience and expertise!

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to the Minnesota Association of Charter School Authorizers (MACSA), the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (MACS), the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB), and the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) for the support you continued to provide this past year!

With Gratitude,

Wendy Swanson Choi on behalf of
Novation Education Opportunities (NEO)