The proposal...

Criteria 1: Parent and Community Need, Engagement, and Support in Targeted Community

I.1. Parent and Community Engagement/Need in Targeted Community

...describes the unique educational and programmatic needs of the targeted community and student population and explains how the Design Team sought parent and community feedback during the proposal development process to better understand and meet those needs.

I.1.a. (Preparation of proposal) (i) The response describes and provides evidence of how the Design Team notified parents and the community of the development of a proposal for a new school. (ii) The proposal explains the process for involving parents/guardians and community members in the planning process and specifies what feedback was incorporated into the proposal.

I.1.b. The proposal presents a clear description of the community and targeted student population that the school seeks to serve. The proposal demonstrates an understanding and provides evidence of the unique needs of the community, parents, and specific population of students and explains how the proposed school aligns with community needs and expectations.

I.2. Evidence of Parent and Community Support in Targeted Community

...provides evidence of parent and community support.

I.2.a. The proposal provides robust forms of evidence of support among parents with school-aged children and includes a sufficient number of letters of intent to enroll or petition signatures from parents of school-aged children to comprise at least half of the first-year enrollment capacity.

I.2.b. The proposal provides robust evidence of community support for the proposed school.

I.3. Parent and Community Engagement Plan and Partnerships (Once in Operation)

...presents a plan for engaging the community and outlines the nature of the community partnerships necessary for the school's success.

I.3.a. The proposal clearly articulates the nature, terms, and scope of service of any partnerships; provides evidence of the partner organization’s commitment to meet those terms; explains how these partnerships will be used to support the school's success from approval through the first five years of operation; and cites who is responsible for overseeing community partnerships.

I.3.b. (i) The proposal clearly outlines any services, resources, programs, or volunteers that the school will offer community members. (ii) The applicant anticipates and honestly addresses any opposition to the school and presents a realistic plan for approaching and overcoming any challenges or potential roadblocks to opening and managing a successful school.
Criteria 2: Academic Capacity

2.1. Mission, Vision, and Culture

...presents a compelling mission, a clear vision for the school's future, a results-oriented educational philosophy, and a well-articulated culture that promotes academic rigor while creating a positive social environment.

2.1.a. The mission is succinct, meaningful, measurable, attainable, and aligned with the identified needs of the community and targeted student population; it clearly identifies the school's guiding principles and core design components, which are consistent with high academic standards. The vision clearly articulates what the school will look like in the near term and future; concrete examples of anticipated student experiences and school achievements are offered to support the vision. Together, the mission and vision clearly indicate what the school intends to do, for whom, and to what degree.

2.1.b. The educational philosophy reflects measurable and manageable priorities aligned with the school's mission and vision. The educational philosophy provides a concise overview of the school's key program components that are critical to its success and to meeting the diverse needs of its student body. The proposal includes a strong rationale for the key design elements, which is supported by research and evidence of success with similar student populations.

2.1.c. The proposed culture fosters a positive environment that establishes high behavioral and academic expectations to support the proposed mission, vision, and educational philosophy. The proposal clearly articulates the systems, traditions, and policies that will support the proposed culture. The proposal explains how the school will measure student progress toward any non-academic goals to help monitor and support school climate. The proposal cites who will be responsible for overseeing these efforts.

2.1.d. The proposal clearly articulates the programs and supports that the school will provide to build college readiness among students, including strategies to expose students to college culture, support students in applying to college (if a high school), and methods for tracking student/alumni college acceptance and persistence rates. The proposal cites who will be responsible for overseeing these efforts.

2.1.e. The proposal clearly articulates how the school will identify, monitor, and support the social, emotional, and physical health needs of all students on an on-going basis. The proposed programs, services, and activities reflect the expected needs of the student population the school seeks to serve. The proposal cites who will be responsible for overseeing these efforts and explains how program effectiveness will be measured.

2.1.f. (i) Proposed discipline policies, behavioral interventions, and classroom management strategies promote positive student behavior and help ensure a safe and productive learning environment. Teachers and administrators consistently and equitably implement consequences and processes
to ensure student safety. The proposal cites who will be responsible for overseeing student discipline and behavioral interventions. (ii) Behavioral expectations are clearly and systematically communicated to students and families. (iii) The proposal clearly explains how the school will protect the rights of students with disabilities in disciplinary actions and proceedings and afford due process for all students.

2.1.g. The proposal includes a clear plan for promoting parent involvement including providing parents access to the educational experience and engaging parents in governance or advisory committees.

2.2. Demonstrated Track Record in Driving Academic Success

... identifies a Design Team with a history of sustained student academic success.

2.2.a. Individuals on the Design Team possess the wide-ranging skills and experience needed to open, manage, and sustain a high-quality school. The proposal clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of Design Team members in contributing to the proposal, as well as any identified roles they may assume within the proposed new school.

2.2.b. Existing Chicago operators must meet replication criteria. If existing Chicago operators do not meet replication criteria based on the historic contractual performance plan, the applicant must present additional quantitative evidence of driving academic achievement or growth on the metrics outlined for existing national operators on pp. 10-12 of the Answer Manual. In order to be considered for replication or expansion, the data on these additional metrics meet the criteria for demonstrating a proven track record outlined on pp. 10-12 of the Answer Manual.

The proposal provides student demographic and performance data on the key indicators specified for every existing school in the network (for existing national operators) or for every academic Design Team/Founding Board member or proposed instructional leader (for new operators). The data provided meet the criteria for demonstrating a proven track record outlined on pp. 10-12 of the Answer Manual. The proposal provides evidence that the existing schools or individual Design Team/Founding Board members have driven academic achievement and growth among similar student populations.

2.2.c. (i) The roles and responsibilities of each member of the instructional leadership team are clearly identified. (ii) The selection criteria clearly identify the skills, qualifications, and characteristics that the Design Team will seek (or have already sought) in a school leader, which align with the attached job descriptions. If a school leader is not required to have prior experience running a school, selection criteria specify how a candidate’s capacity to successfully open and manage a high-quality school will be assessed. (iii) If identified, proposed school leadership demonstrates the experience and ability to drive student achievement with populations similar to those the school seeks to serve. If a proposed school leader does not have experience running a school, he or she has completed or will complete a leadership program or fellowship working with the same grade configurations prior to school opening.
2.3. Academic Goals and Assessment Plan

...articulates academic goals and plans to assess academic performance.

2.3.a. The academic goals are specific, measurable, ambitious, realistic, and time-bound; they align with the mission, vision, and educational philosophy, while reflecting an understanding of the needs of entering students. The academic goals are aligned with the assessment plan.

2.3.b (i) The assessment plan and table includes the required assessments for its grade levels. The assessment plan and table include diagnostic, benchmark/interim, and summative assessments that are valid, reliable, and appropriately aligned with curricula and Common Core State Standards; measures student attainment both in terms of absolute scores and growth over time (including within-year and year-to-year gains or losses); and generates rich data on student progress. (ii) The proposal describes the purpose, design, and format of each assessment, explains why it was selected, and notes any alignment with state and/or Common Core State Standards. The proposal identifies who is responsible for administering assessments.

2.3.c. (i) The proposal clearly articulates the data collection and analysis processes that school leaders and teachers use to monitor student progress toward identified goals, make curricular adjustments, improve instruction, and identify areas for professional development. (ii) The proposal describes appropriate methods of providing progress reports to students and parents.

2.4. Curriculum and Instruction

...supports the educational philosophy with a robust curriculum and instruction plans that are designed to drive achievement for all students.

2.4.a. (i) The curriculum plan is aligned with the school’s mission and the Common Core Standards. (ii) There is demonstrated evidence of the effectiveness of the curricula in serving similar student populations and in keeping students on track for college and career readiness. (iii) The proposal explains how curricular materials will help guide teachers’ instructional planning. (iv) The development timeline has clearly delineated roles and responsibilities and is aligned with critical school milestones including hiring, professional development, etc. The proposal explains how the curriculum will be continuously improved to help support and drive student achievement.

2.4.b. (i) The instructional strategies reflect and support the mission, vision, and educational philosophy of the school. (ii) The instructional plan includes evidence that proposed strategies and techniques have been effective with student populations similar to those the school seeks to serve. (iii) The proposal discusses how instructional strategies will be implemented at the classroom-level. (a) The instructional plan clearly articulates methods for identifying student needs upon enrollment and discusses how the assessments will impact instructional planning for the school year. (b) The proposal demonstrates a clear understanding of expected remediation needs of incoming students and describes appropriate instructional strategies, programs, services and supports to meet their needs. (c) The instructional plan includes programs and
services to ensure all students are challenged with the appropriate level of rigor, including students with accelerated learning needs.

2.4.c. The proposal clearly articulates a plan for identifying and supporting students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and at risk students; the proposal identifies necessary supports to ensure that these students have access to the general educational curriculum, are integrated in ways that support their development, receive necessary services, participate in standardized testing, and are included in all educational, extracurricular, and culture-building activities.

2.4.d. (i) The school’s annual calendar and daily schedule are aligned with the educational philosophy, curriculum, scope and sequence, instructional strategies, and professional development. Additional school hours and days are reflected in the school’s proposed budget. (ii & iii) The description and attached sample teacher and student weekly schedules provide a clear picture of how a teacher or student would respectively spend a typical day at the school. The provided annual calendar and sample teacher and student schedules align with descriptions of academic and non-academic activities described in other parts of the proposal.

2.5. Talent Management

...describes plans to recruit, develop, support, and evaluate an instructional staff who can drive student achievement.

2.5.a. (i) The staffing plan includes all instructional and non-instructional positions in the school over the five years of the charter contract. The attached school-level organizational chart and job descriptions are aligned with the staffing plan and clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities for each position; management roles for instructional leadership, curriculum, personnel, budgeting, financial management, legal compliance, and any special staffing needs are identified. The proposed staffing model is adequate to meet the needs of the target student population and reflects the key design elements of the proposed school model. (ii) The proposal identifies strategies for recruiting and hiring staff members who can drive student achievement. Hiring criteria and job descriptions are clearly aligned to the school’s mission, educational philosophy, and professional culture. (iii) The proposed compensation and benefits packages are competitive and will allow the school to attract and retain highly qualified staff.

2.5.b. (i) The professional development (PD) plan is clearly aligned with the mission, vision, educational philosophy, curriculum, and instruction and clearly delineates roles and responsibilities for facilitating professional development opportunities. The school’s schedule and calendar reflect adequate time for professional development. Expected professional development costs are included in the budget. (ii) The PD plan clearly explains how student data and teacher evaluations will be used to inform professional development. (iii) The PD plan articulates a process for measuring the effectiveness of professional development and making adjustments accordingly.
2.5.c. The proposal describes an induction plan for all teachers that supports the school’s mission, vision, educational philosophy, and effectively communicates cultural expectations to staff.

2.5.d. The proposal clearly articulates how the leadership team will define clear expectations for cultural expectations, including required norms and values and opportunities for collaboration and development to promote high staff performance and retention.

2.5.e. The evaluation plan supports the school’s educational philosophy and professional culture; includes schedules and processes for teacher observation and evaluation; and cites who is responsible for overseeing faculty and staff evaluation. The proposal explains the rationale for implementing the specified approach, citing any evidence or existing research supporting its effectiveness, if applicable.

The academic capacity section clearly articulates how the mission and vision, educational philosophy, curriculum and instruction, assessment system, and staffing model are all integrated and will be effectively implemented as part of a comprehensive educational program.

Criteria 3: Operational Capacity

3.1. General Operations
...articulates a plan for supporting a smooth opening and providing the level of operational supports necessary to support a high quality academic program.

3.1.a. The proposal articulates operational goals that reflect the various stages of school development, clearly explains how goals will be used to monitor operational progress and guide corrective actions, and cites which staff member is responsible for overseeing progress on the identified metrics.

3.1.b. The start-up plan is realistic and detailed. The start-up plan outlines specific tasks, their associated timeline, designated point person, and start date and completion dates. The operational start-up plan is aligned with both the school’s proposed opening and development of academic programs.

3.1.c. (i) The proposal includes a specific and realistic plan to recruit and retain the target population and outlines specific strategies to attract students with disabilities, students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), students who are English Language Learners (ELL), and students in at-risk situations, including, but not limited to students who are homeless students. (ii) Application, enrollment, and registration policies are clear, accessible to all students and families, and legally compliant.
3.1.d. The transportation plan aligns with the requirements of the Illinois Charter Schools Law.

3.1.e. The ADA compliance plan clearly articulates how the proposed school will ensure compliance with requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

3.2. Governance Model
...describes a strong governance plan to build a sustainable school model and ensure clear lines of accountability.

3.2.a. (i) The governance plan outlines appropriate structures, roles, and lines of authority necessary to oversee the success and sustainability of a new public charter school. (ii) The governance outlines formalized procedures for the Board to monitor the school’s academic, financial, and operational progress. (iii) The proposal provides clear criteria for evaluating school leaders and mechanisms for holding school leaders accountable for school performance. (iv) The proposed governance model complies with the Illinois Charter School Law, Open Meetings Act, and the Freedom of Information Act.

3.2.b. The comprehensive organizational chart presents sensible and clear organization-level decision-making authority and delineates the respective roles and responsibilities of the board, management organization, school administration, and any school advisory bodies or parent/teacher councils. The oversight structure appropriately distributes responsibilities and decision-making authority.

3.2.c The Design Team has identified at a minimum the Board Chair, Vice Chair, and Treasurer. Individuals named on the founding board of directors possess the skills and experience needed to develop and govern a successful, accountable, and compliant school.

3.2.d (i) The desired composition of the board reflects the skills, experiences, and qualifications needed to effectively support the school’s mission, vision, and educational philosophy and to maintain academic, financial, and operational excellence. The plan clearly articulates how parental, professional educator, and community involvement will be incorporated into the governance structure, in accordance with Illinois Charter Schools Law. (ii) The proposal presents a viable plan to recruit Board members with diverse skillsets to serve on the founding Board prior to school opening. If skill sets are still missing, the proposal presents a clear plan to recruit those members. (iii) Board selection processes are aligned with the mission, vision, and educational philosophy of the school and ensure that the Board will have the required expertise to provide rigorous academic, operational, and financial oversight of the proposed school.

3.2.e. The proposal describes clear procedures to identify and address or mitigate any perceived or actual conflicts of interest among founding Board members. The Code of Ethics is attached to the proposal and includes a formal conflict of interest policy with specific procedures for implementing the policy.
3.2.f. (i) The proposal provides a clear plan for establishing the “working” Board in the planning year. (ii) The proposal clearly indicates how Board members will be developed on an ongoing basis to provide meaningful oversight and support. (iii) The proposal describes how the Board will evaluate its own effectiveness.

3.4 Education Management Organizations (MOs) (for design teams proposing to contract with an EMO)

…presents a clear Management Organization (MO) selection and evaluation process and scope of services. (if applicable)

3.4.a. The MO selection process includes selection criteria that support the school’s educational philosophy and are focused on demonstrated success at driving student achievement. Evidence is provided that the proposed MO meets identified selection criteria.

3.4.b. The proposal narrative and proposed MO contract clearly articulate the relationship, roles, and responsibilities of the proposed school’s Board, the MO, school administration and staff with regard to the terms of the contract. The draft MO contract clearly articulates:

- the services to be provided by the MO,
- compensation to be paid for those services,
- financial controls and oversight,
- methods of contract oversight and enforcements, and
- conditions for renewal or termination.

In addition, the contract clearly:

- establishes the primacy of the charter contract over the MO contact;
- identifies the proposed school’s board as the party ultimately responsible for the school;
- defines the MO as a service provider;
- demonstrates the avoidance of conflicts of interest between the board and MO; and
- requires that all materials purchased with public funds are property of the school, not the MO.

Attachments with the MO’s most recent financial statements and federal tax returns are included for review.

3.4.c. The MO monitoring process includes measurable performance indicators, identifies consequences if those indicators are not met, and outlines regular evaluation and scheduled renewal decision-making by the school’s board. The proposal clearly articulates the board’s capacity to terminate the relationship if necessary and identifies contingency plans in the event the relationship is terminated. There are clearly defined financial controls governing any relationship with an MO and a clear demonstration that the board retains financial oversight over any MO relationship.
3.4.d. In the case that any schools have been placed on fiscal probation, had their contract terminated, had schools closed, or failed to open an approved school, the proposal clearly explains the circumstances of the incidents and how the MO has responded to each situation.

Criteria 4: Economic Soundness

4.1 School Budget
…contains a reasonable, viable, and sustainable five year budget.

4.1.a. The financial forms are complete, include clear and reasonable assumptions, and reflect sustainability and financial health. All proposed programs, strategies, and services are reflected in the budget.

4.1.b. The budget narrative clearly articulates how spending is aligned with the school’s mission, vision, philosophy, and development and articulates how resources will be used to reflect school priorities. The budget narrative provides additional explanations for supplemental assumptions and projected revenue and expenditure amounts in the budget.

4.1.c. The development plan identifies viable funders and includes evidence of their interest; the plan is diversified with contingency plans for anticipated revenue losses.

4.2 Financial Controls
…clearly articulates a plan for fiscal oversight.

4.2.a. The proposal cites specific practices, policies, and assigned responsibilities for ensuring fiscal soundness and compliance, including (but not limited to) the timely production and review of financial statements, segregation of duties, safeguarding of assets, hiring qualified personnel for the financial position(s), and Board financial oversight. Collectively, the proposed financial controls are sufficient to ensure proper use of public funds.

4.3. Facilities
…identifies reasonable facility options and clearly articulates school site needs.

4.3.a. The facility plan provides a clear timeline for securing a facility and preparing for opening in the required timeline. Risks associated with the proposed plan are identified and addressed with appropriate contingency plans.

4.3.b. Identified space requirements adequately address the programmatic and operational needs of the school (as evidenced by an adequate number of classrooms, specialized spaces, and administrative spaces). Space requirements also reflect any special programmatic features and are adequate to accommodate any proposed growth.
4.3.c. If an independent facility is proposed that facility reflects identified space requirements and is viable and available in the proposed opening timeline. The facilities plan includes a cost estimate for each location, evidence of interest from each facility’s owner/s, and clearly articulates a plan for completing renovations necessary at proposed facilities to make them school ready, including providing construction estimates and timelines, identifying potential funding sources, achieving ADA compliance, and appropriately addressing any risks associated with the proposed site or plan.

Section 5: Existing National Management Organizations (MOs)

5.1 Vision and Theory of Change

…presents a clear, focused, coordinated and compelling vision and theory of change that will lead to a meaningful impact and the desired educational outcomes for students in Chicago.

5.1.a. The applicant submits a comprehensive list of all existing schools/campuses within its portfolio and provides the requested information for each school/campus.

5.1.b. The proposed growth plan is supported by sound rationale for the number of schools proposed, the rate of growth for the network, and the decision to expand into Chicago. The applicant lists all proposals pending or recently approved by other authorizers.

5.1.c. The proposal includes well-defined non-negotiables that will underlie school culture and academic outcomes and provides a strong rationale for the identified school-level autonomies in alignment with these non-negotiables.

5.1.d. The proposal demonstrates a thoughtful approach to replication and includes clearly defined academic, operational, and financial benchmarks to guide replication decisions. The proposal clearly specifies how the organization’s growth strategy would be modified if these benchmarks are not met, including contingency planning to address risks associated with changes to the proposed growth plan.

5.2. Historical Performance

…includes a thoughtful discussion of shortcomings at existing campuses.

5.2.a. The proposal includes evidence of a thorough review of academic performance at all campuses and outlines robust, actionable improvement plans, including follow-up and mechanisms, at both the school and organizational levels to address identified issues. Identified areas for improvement and associated action plans are presented and aligned with the school's educational philosophy and academic goals.

5.3. Organizational Capacity
5.3.a. Organizational charts are comprehensive, clearly specify the lines of authority, and include responsible spans of control within and between schools, the Board, and the Management Organization. Organizational chart reasonably depicts oversight and roles and responsibilities between the governing body and MO.

5.4. Facilities and Finances

...demonstrates the financial viability of the proposed model.

5.4.a. The proposal presents a viable plan for financing facilities.

5.4.b. The organization has assessed the risk associated with the proposed facilities strategy and has built contingency plans to ensure that the schools are able to open as proposed.

5.4.c. The organization has demonstrated project management capacity and experience to manage the facility development.

5.5. Risk Management

...is reflective about prioritizing risks to implementing the 5-year plan with fidelity.

5.5.a. The organization has demonstrated the ability to address the identified risks and monitor the success of actions taken.