



**PILLSBURY UNITED
COMMUNITIES**

OFFICE OF PUBLIC
CHARTER SCHOOLS

AUTHORIZER APPROVED PLAN

2016 - 2021

Overview

Per Minnesota Statute, Pillsbury United Communities is an approved authorizer of charter schools. This document is an outline of processes and protocols of the Pillsbury United Communities Office of Public Charter Schools.

Submitted:

August 3, 2016

Contents

Measure A.1 - Authorizer Mission:	2
Measure A.2 - Authorizer Vision and Organizational Goals:	3
Measure A.3 - Authorizer Structure of Operations and Measure A.4 - Authorizer Staff Expertise:.....	5
Measure A.5 - Authorizer Capacity and Skill Development of Leadership and Authorizing Staff:	8
Measure A.6 - Authorizer Operational Budget for Authorizing the Portfolio of Charter Schools:	9
Measure A.7 - Authorizer Operational Conflicts of Interest:.....	9
Measure A.8 - Ensuring Autonomy of the Schools in the Portfolio:	10
Measure A.9 - Authorizer Self-Evaluation of Capacity, Infrastructure and Practices:	12
Measure A.10 - Authorizer High Quality Authorizing Dissemination:	13
Measure A.11 - Authorizer Compliance to Responsibilities Stated in Statute:	14

Measure A.1 - Authorizer Mission: *The authorizer has a clear and compelling mission for charter school authorizing.*

Mission:

Pillsbury United Communities (PUC) is proud of its historical roots and tradition of serving economically disadvantaged families. It employs 180 people and impacted the lives of 54,000 people in 2013-14. PUC’s organizational mission is to create choice, change and connection. These organizational values are reflected in the vision and mission of the Office of Public Charter Schools (PUC-OPCS).

PUC-OPCS’ mission was iterated through the school directors and other influential stakeholders in 2008. The mission states:

PUC charter schools will:

- offer bold and innovative educational strategies;
- provide an environment that promotes respect for all students and their individual identities; and
- engage students in academic and authentic learning opportunities, service learning, and personal development.

Mission in Action:

Pillsbury United Communities – Office of Public Charter Schools serves students who have not experienced success in traditional public school settings or who have been underserved educationally. Examples of these populations include homeless and highly mobile students, students experiencing poverty, students who have dropped out of school, students involved in gangs, and other students and families who are seeking out a school model reflective of their situational needs and assets. Serving these populations of students is one way PUC-OPCS carries out our mission.

The mission also remains relevant in our work day to day. It can be found in OPCS’s Strategy Document (see [Appendix 1: PUC-OPCS Strategic Priorities 2012-2017](#)), school applications (see [Appendix 2: New School Application Guidance](#) and [Appendix 3: Transfer Application](#)), quality school renewal applications (see [Appendix 12: Charter Contract Template, Exhibit J](#)), and in our ongoing oversight (see [Appendix 12: Charter Contract Template, Exhibit K](#)) The mission guides our work in these areas, from a broad strategic view to the minutia of our decision making.

Our mission also aligns with charter school law, particularly Minnesota Statute 124E.01 subd. 1- the primary and additional purposes, as shown below.

MN Statute 124E.01 subd. 1 Purposes	PUC Mission Alignment
--	------------------------------

The primary purpose of this section is to improve all pupil learning and all student achievement.	PUC authorized schools will provide an environment that promotes respect for all students and their individual identities.
Additional purposes include to:	PUC authorized schools will engage students in academic and authentic learning opportunities
(1) increase learning opportunities for all pupils;	PUC authorized schools will offer bold and innovative educational strategies.
(2) encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;	PUC authorized schools will offer bold and innovative educational strategies and engage students in service learning and personal development.
(3) measure learning outcomes and create different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes;	PUC authorized schools will provide an environment that promotes respect and engages students in academic and authentic learning opportunities.
(4) establish new forms of accountability for schools; or	PUC authorized schools will offer bold and innovative educational strategies.
(5) create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.	

Measure A.2 - Authorizer Vision and Organizational Goals: *The authorizer has a comprehensive vision for charter school authorizing with clear organizational goals and time frames for achievement that are aligned with the purposes of Minnesota law.*

Vision:

Pillsbury United Communities – Office of Public Charter Schools’ vision was iterated in 2008 with all charter school directors, the Advisory Council, and PUC leadership (see [Appendix 1: PUC-OPCS Strategic Priorities 2012-2017](#)). It states:

“Authorized schools are committed to creating communities where students can excel academically and socially to realize their opportunities and potential for higher education, citizenship, self-sufficiency, and personal fulfillment.”

Alignment with Organizational Goals and Minnesota Statute:

MN State Statute 124E.01 supports PUC-OPCS’ chartering vision in its primary and secondary purposes.

MN Statute 124E.01 Purposes	PUC Vision Alignment
The primary purpose of this section is to improve all pupil learning and all student achievement.creating communities where students can excel academically and socially...
Additional purposes include to: (1) increase learning opportunities for all pupils;	... students can excel academically and socially to realize their opportunities and potential ...



(2) encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;	Authorized schools are committed to creating communities where students can excel...
(3) measure learning outcomes and create different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes;to realize their opportunities and potential for higher education, citizenship, self-sufficiency, and personal fulfillment ...
(4) establish new forms of accountability for schools; or	... to realize their opportunities and potential for higher education, citizenship, self-sufficiency, and personal fulfillment ...
(5) create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.	Authorized schools are committed to creating communities...

PUC-OPCS’ explicit vision statement complements the broader PUC vision that “we envision individuals and families are well and living in thriving communities.” Throughout our history, PUC has been known for its responsiveness to community identified needs, expertise in understanding and building relationships stakeholders, and core commitment to serving individuals in dire need.

PUC believes that education is the cornerstone in ending the cycle of poverty. Through its community connections, PUC originally became an authorizer of charter schools because the communities we serve identified a need for creative and innovative educational opportunities for its constituents. PUC-OPCS is a relevant, necessary authorizer in the state of Minnesota because it understands the impact of Minnesota’s achievement gap and has intentionally decided to address the gap by seeking out charter schools that provide culturally inclusive, relevant and innovative educational curricula and programming.

Our vision is supplemented by our chartering values (see [Appendix 1: PUC-OPCS Strategic Priorities 2012-2017](#)):

- We are motivated by the success of the people we serve
- We value open and honest communication
- We work in partnership, collaboration and participate in peer review
- We value diversity in all its forms
- We strive toward continuous improvement
- We value transparency
- We understand that fiscal responsibility is required
- We value quality board training and development

Furthermore, PUC-OPCS has developed priorities specific to chartering with a deep understanding of who we are as a department and organization. As seen in the Strategy Document, PUC-OPCS articulates



and implements an intentional strategic plan for chartering that includes clear priorities, goals, and time frames for achievement. PUC-OPCS' 2012-2017 organizational goals focus on seven strategies:

1. Broadly articulating the unique success and niches of our schools
2. Expanding authorizing capacity
3. Identifying areas for Internal Improvement
4. Close chronically low performing schools
5. Identify 1-2 schools for refresh interventions
6. Transfer in existing high performing schools
7. Open new, high promise schools

PUC-OPCS is actively working to put a new strategic plan in place by the end of 2017 (see [Appendix 14: Strategic Plan Update 2017-2022](#)).

Measure A.3 - Authorizer Structure of Operations and Measure A.4 -

Authorizer Staff Expertise: *The authorizer has a clear structure of duties and responsibilities and sufficient resources to effectively oversee its portfolio of charter schools. The authorizer has appropriate experience, expertise and skills to sufficiently oversee the portfolio of charter schools.*

Pillsbury United Communities – Office of Public Charter Schools (PUC-OPCS) operates with a clear structure of duties and responsibilities and sufficient resources to effectively oversee its portfolio of charter schools.

Organizational Chart:

PUC-OPCS is a program of the Urban Institute which reports to the PUC CEO, Chanda Smith Baker, and the PUC Board of Directors (see [Appendix 4: PUC-OPCS Organization Chart](#) and [Appendix 5: Organizational Chart](#)). Principles that guide the charter authorizing work, processes to inform decision making, and recommendations from the Review Team are communicated to the PUC Board of Directors through staff reports, both written and oral. PUC-OPCS and the Advisory Council make up the Review Team. The Review Team assists in decision making and application review.

Staffing Capacity:

Regular evaluation of staffing capacity takes place at a departmental level across the Urban Institute, and within PUC, to ensure that sufficient staffing capacity exists to meet the needs/demands of charter school authorizing.

PUC-OPCS projects a minimum staffing structure of 1.0 FTE per 12 charter schools authorized. As adjustments in the portfolio take place, an equivalent change in staffing will take place to ensure sufficient compliance and evaluation. Authorizing staff will retain appropriate expertise in charter schools, curriculum, instruction, management, facilities, finance, and law.

All personnel are provided regular professional development to achieve and maintain high standards of professional authorizing practice and to enable continual agency improvement on strategic initiatives.

Board members regularly attend board governance trainings, PUC-OPCS staff attend national and local conferences/trainings, and legal and financial consultants maintain appropriate licensure. PUC-OPCS values professional development as necessary in order to continuously improve the department's authorizing performance (see [Measure A.5](#) for additional information on professional development).

Structure of Duties:

PUC-OPCS enlists expertise and competent leadership for all areas essential to charter school oversight. Duties are assigned through staff, contractual relationships, and /or intra-or inter-agency collaborations. The June 2016 PUC-OPCS department is made up of 5.3 FTE, a 7 member Advisory Council, 18 members on the PUC Board of Directors, and consultants as necessary.

- A. PUC Board of Directors
 - a. Expertise: charter schools, policy, governance, finance, management, diverse learning needs
 - b. Duty: final authorization decision maker
- B. PUC CEO
 - a. Expertise: charter schools, policy, governance, communications
 - b. Duty: Strategic Oversight and Advisement
- C. Director (0.3 FTE)
 - a. Expertise: charter schools, curriculum, instruction, finance, management, governance, policy, communications
 - b. Duty: strategy and partnership
- D. Charter Liaison (1.0 FTE)
 - a. Expertise: charter schools, instruction, finance, management, facilities, governance, policy, diverse learning needs
 - b. Duty: landscape and relationships
- E. Operations Manager (1.0 FTE)
 - a. Expertise: charter schools, curriculum, instruction, management, facilities, finances, governance, evaluation, policy/ law, diverse learning needs
 - b. Duty: performance and authorizing practice
- F. External Relations and Special Projects Manager (1.0 FTE)
 - a. Expertise: charter schools, governance, management, communications, diverse learning needs
 - b. Duty: initiatives and communications
- G. Public Affairs and Evaluation Coordinator (1.0 FTE)
 - a. Expertise: charter schools, policy/ law, instruction, evaluation
 - b. Duty: policy and evaluation
- H. Data and Program Evaluation Specialist (1.0 FTE June- August, 0.5 FTE September- May)
 - a. Expertise: evaluation, policy, diverse learning needs
 - b. Duty: data and oversight
- I. Coordinator of Evaluation and Organizational Performance (0.05 FTE)

- a. Expertise: evaluation, charter schools
 - b. Duty: evaluation and organizational performance.
- J. External Consultants (including legal and financial expertise)
 - a. Expertise: as needed
 - b. Duty: as assigned
- K. 7 member Advisory Council
 - a. Expertise: charter school governance, special education, English language learners, curriculum, instruction, diverse learner needs
 - b. Duty: See roles and responsibilities in [Appendix 6: Advisory Council Roles & Responsibilities](#)

Duties and expertise are further delineated internally and continuously evaluated.

Regularly, PUC-OPCS relies on financial consultants to review and evaluate. The financial consultants are certified accountants with extensive knowledge on charter schools, nonprofits, and public schools. The ad hoc consultants analyze the financial documents and assess via national accepted standards. PUC utilizes MACC Commonwealth for comprehensive financial day-to-day financial services including budgeting, invoicing, accounts payable and receivable. All professionals follow generally accepted accounting principles.

PUC-OPCS will maintain a 5-10 member Advisory Council. All members have extensive operational, financial and academic experience that allow them to review PUC documents to ensure appropriate decision making. At least one member will be a director of a charter school within the PUC network of schools, upholding PUC's value of participatory decision making.

PUC-OPCS utilizes legal consulting. PUC has legal counsel on retainer specific to non-profit, finance, and governance law. Other legal consultants are supplemented with particular knowledge in the intersection of charter school, education, and non-profit law. The ad hoc services provide legal advice and services in compliance with local, state, and federal law.

Additional experts are utilized on an ad hoc basis for reviewing charter schools. These individuals supplement the above expertise to ensure transparent, rigorous review of authorized schools. Typically these individuals are leaders within the PUC network of schools.

Manages and Safeguards Information:

PUC-OPCS has state-of-the art data management and infrastructure through Pillsbury United Communities and the associated MACC Commonwealth. The MACC Commonwealth is a partnership organization for human resources, finance, and technology support. Business continuity protocols are followed including that all data is backed-up a minimum of every 24 hours, data-replication technologies move data to off-site locations at regular intervals, a testing program whereby viability of the recovery is verified, and third-party contracts for alternative work space. A full technology policy is included as [Appendix 7: All Technology Policy](#).

PUC-OPCS utilizes an online software, Epicenter, to collect and safeguard records. There are extensive security protocols through the host agency, the National Charter Schools Institute that meet national data security standards. Additionally, PUC-OPCS entered a data sharing agreement with MDE to safeguard protected student and school data.

Measure A.5 - Authorizer Capacity and Skill Development of Leadership and Authorizing Staff:

The authorizer has a plan to build the knowledge and skill base of its authorizing leadership and staff through professional development. The authorizer has a plan to provide professional development aligned with its operations, vision and goals for overseeing its portfolio of charter schools.

Pillsbury United Communities – Office of Public Charter Schools intentionally builds the knowledge and skill base of its authorizing leadership and staff through professional development. PUC-OPCS employees are provided regular professional development in order to achieve and maintain high standards of professional authorizing practice and to enable continual agency improvement.

Professional Development Plan for OPCS Team:

The PUC-OPCS team receives professional development in a variety of ways. First, each individual maintains a personal professional development plan with their supervisor (see [Appendix 13: 2015-2016 Performance Evaluation Forms](#)). These plans are made in alignment with OPCS’ strategic priorities and mission and are evaluated on an annual basis. Second, the team seeks out opportunities to develop as a team via bi-annual OPCS retreats in addition to attending conferences. Annually the OPCS team attends national and local conferences related to charter schools and/or authorizing. Conferences include, but are not limited to, the National Association for Charter School Authorizers’ (NACSA) Annual Conference, the Educational Equity in Action Conference, the National Association of Charter Schools (NACS) Conference, the Annual Minnesota Charter School Conference, etc.

The PUC-OPCS Advisory Council is trained in a manner appropriate to the role and in accordance with Appendix 6: Advisory Council Roles & Responsibilities.

The PUC Board of Directors is trained in a manner appropriate to the role and in accordance with the bylaws of PUC. Each new member is provided onboarding to the organization, preparation on nonprofit governance, and pairing with a veteran board member. Annually the PUC board conducts a self-assessment, dissects the findings, and prepares a plan for improvement. All PUC trainings follow the guidelines of the Charity Review Council.

Alignment with Operations, Vision, and Goals:

A self-evaluation of the strategic priorities is completed annually. Professional development goals are then developed with each OPCS member to ensure that strategic priorities are met. As seen in the Strategy Document, PUC-OPCS articulates and implements an intentional strategic plan for chartering that includes clear priorities, goals, and time frames for achievement (see [Appendix 1: PUC-OPCS Strategic Priorities 2012-2017](#)).

Measure A.6 - Authorizer Operational Budget for Authorizing the Portfolio of Charter Schools:

The authorizer has a plan to allocate resources commensurate with its stated budget, needs and responsibilities of authorizing the portfolio of charter schools.

Purposeful Resource Allocation:

The annual budget is set by the Director of the Pillsbury United Communities – Office of Public Charter Schools department, along with the CEO/President of Pillsbury United Communities. The five year projection is shown with anticipated revenues, expenditures, and staff increases in relation to portfolio growth (see [Appendix 8: 2016-2021 Budget](#)).

PUC-OPCS maintains a healthy budget and responsibly applies its funds to a robust authorizing practice. PUC-OPCS determines the financial needs of the authorizing office and devotes sufficient financial resources to fulfill its authoring responsibilities in accordance with national standards and commensurate with the scale of the charter school portfolio. The department deploys funds effectively and efficiently with the public’s interest in mind.

Resources Sufficient to Meet Authorizing Responsibilities:

The budget is reviewed regularly to ensure adequate ability to fulfill authorizing responsibilities and the needs and scale of its portfolio. The review commensurate adjustments are in line with Minnesota charter school fee statute, additional resource opportunities and further resource devotion are in line with strategic priorities.

Meet Needs and Scale of Portfolio:

The charter school portfolio is maintained, at minimum, 1.0 FTE per every 12 operational charter schools. Staffing changes correspond with portfolio adjustments, expertise needed, staff duties required, authorizer demands, the needs of students, and/or PUC’s vision for authorizing charter schools.

Prepares for Legal Fees in Accordance with Closure and Authorizing Duties:

In addition to maintaining an appropriate staffing structure, PUC-OPCS rolls over any annual surplus as a legal reserve. Because of the regulatory and political nature of authorizing, it is essential to be prepared in the event that any legal challenges arise. PUC-OPCS does not make decisions based on budgetary effects and regularly reinforces this National Association of Charter School Authorizers standard within the OPCS department, Advisory Council, and PUC Board of Directors.

Measure A.7 - Authorizer Operational Conflicts of Interest: *The authorizer implements a clear policy to address conflicts of interest in all decision-making processes concerning the portfolio of charter schools.*

Conflict of Interest Policy:

Pillsbury United Communities – Office of Public Charter Schools works to protect student and public interest, ensuring that its own work is ethically conducted. One way in which this is accomplished is that PUC-OPCS does not provide fee-based services to its charter schools, thereby avoiding direct financial conflicts of interest. PUC-OPCS does not provide fee-based services to our schools, in line with National Association of Charter School Authorizers’ standards, outlined in the third standard specifically which ensure a schools’ autonomy.

Furthermore, decision-making processes are multi-step and include multiple individuals such as the Advisory Council and PUC Board of Directors. There is clear documentation of authorizer and school expectations in the performance framework and contract. Also, all PUC-OPCS employees have a signed conflict of interest policy which is located within the PUC Employee Handbook as Section Six Part E (see [Appendix 9: PUC Employee Conflict of Interest Policy](#)).

Additionally, both the PUC Board of Directors and the Authorizer Advisory Council have signed copies of [Appendix 10: Conflict of Interest Policy – 2012](#) on file. This document allows space for the board and council members to outline any additional concerns or areas where they may have a conflict of interest with the organization.

If a conflict were to be found in a potential outside reviewer, a formal complaint would be filed with PUC-OPCS and [Appendix 11: Stakeholder Grievance Process](#) would begin.

Implementation of Policy:

PUC-OPCS has implemented our conflict of interest policy with fidelity and ensuring that governing boards are independent of the authorizer, aligning with the NACSA standard outlined above.

Example: Contract Renewal Conflict of Interest: We have had directors of schools in our portfolio also serve on our Advisory Council. When any director’s school applies to the Advisory Council for PUC recommendations, they step away from their roles on the Advisory Council in order to remove themselves from these reviews and decisions. Any school director serving on the Advisory Council has signed conflict of interest forms, as do all Advisory Council Members.

Example: Application Review Conflict of Interest: During new school application, change in authorizer, expansion, and closure processes, conflicts of interest are minimized by ensuring that all reviewers have signed conflict of interest forms filed with PUC-OPCS. Application reviewers are PUC personnel, Advisory Council Members, and PUC Board of Directors—all of which have signed conflict of interest policies with the human resources department.

Measure A.8 - Ensuring Autonomy of the Schools in the Portfolio: *The authorizer implements a policy to preserve and support the essential autonomies of the portfolio of charter schools.*

School Autonomy in Policy:

Pillsbury United Communities – Office of Public Charter Schools ensures the autonomy of our portfolio schools in a variety of ways. The Charter School Contract (see [Appendix 12: Charter Contract Template](#)),

describes the monitoring authority of the authorizer. These sections delineate the ways in which PUC-OPCS will gather information on the school's activities, the termination process, and the option for nonrenewal of a contract. The contract describes how the schools are responsible for the academic achievement of their students and how PUC-OPCS delivers authorizing.

"Except as otherwise provided in this Contract, PUC shall have no authority or control over operational, administrative or financial responsibility for the school," (see [Appendix 12: Charter Contract Template](#)). Similar language is included in all PUC-OPCS executed contracts.

Additionally, PUC-OPCS executed contracts contain an Exhibit, the "Range of Possible Interventions," (see [Appendix 12: Charter Contract Template, Exhibit L](#)) which describes the process and the type of interventions a school may encounter. The autonomy of the school is upheld with minimal disruption to ensure compliance and effective evaluation of charter schools academics, operations, and finances.

School Autonomy in Practice:

PUC-OPCS seeks to support the varying ways schools strive toward increasing their performance while ensuring their autonomy to do so. For instance, the Performance Framework has a variety of assessments from which schools may choose the indicator they feel is most appropriate for their students (i.e. NWEA vs. FAST, or ABSVAB vs. ACT) (see [Appendix 12: Charter Contract Template, Exhibit K](#)). Such ingrained flexibility demonstrates that the department expects student achievement information as an indicator of the school's performance, but permits autonomy in which assessment is utilized to gather the information.

Throughout the year, PUC-OPCS hosts monthly charter school directors meetings. Occasionally, external consultants and other educational service providers present to the charter directors. PUC-OPCS believes strongly in connecting resources with our charter schools, while maintaining the school's ability to pick and choose the most appropriate services for their exact needs. PUC-OPCS refrains from directing or participating in educational decisions or choices that are appropriately within a school's purview. Also, PUC-OPCS upholds the school's autonomy in making their own decisions regarding instructional program, design, use of time, and budgeting; while connecting charter schools with applicable resources and services.

PUC-OPCS minimizes administrative and compliance burdens through iterating submissions in tandem with the charter directors. We also minimize burdens through utilizing an online platform for document submission, Epicenter, and readily available data sources, such as the Minnesota Department of Education Report Card online portal.

The National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) lists several principles of autonomy that high-quality authorizers must honor and preserve to ensure school success. These include school governing board independence from authorizer; personnel; school vision and culture; instructional program, design, and use of time; and budgeting. PUC-OPCS' practices align with NACSA's principles of autonomy.

All schools in our portfolio have independent boards, complete control over personnel, school vision and culture, budget, and instructional program, design, and use of time. As demonstrated by the flexibility built into the Performance Framework, PUC-OPCS authorized schools are held accountable for their outcomes rather than the process they utilize to obtain said outcomes.

Overall, PUC-OPCS understands and delivers upon the NACSA principle of autonomy, including that an authorizer must hold schools accountable for their performance, minimize administrative and compliance burdens on schools, and focus on a school's outcomes rather than processes.

Measure A.9 - Authorizer Self-Evaluation of Capacity, Infrastructure and Practices: *The authorizer plans to self-evaluate its internal ability (capacity, infrastructure and practices) to oversee the portfolio of charter schools.*

Pillsbury United Communities – Office of Public Charter Schools (PUC-OPCS) is open to potential areas of growth and is continuously evaluating its internal ability to oversee our portfolio of charter schools. Four major mechanisms for self-evaluation include individual professional development plans, department retreats, strategic planning, and external evaluations.

Individual Professional Development Plans:

At an individual level, each person in the department refines an individual professional development plan with their supervisor annually. The plans include both department level goals and personal goals (see [Appendix 13: 2015-2016 Performance Evaluation Forms](#)). The goals are set up in alignment with PUC-OPCS mission, vision, and organizational goals (see [Appendix 1: PUC-OPCS Strategic Priorities 2012-2017](#)). Aligning individual's professional development goals with the strategic goals of the department is one way PUC-OPCS ensures adequate capacity, infrastructure, and practices for overseeing our portfolio of schools.

Office Retreats:

PUC-OPCS engages in retreats as a department at least twice a year. This is an opportunity to review progress on our strategic goals, set interim goals for success, and make plans to address any areas in our processes that need improvement.

Strategic Planning:

PUC-OPCS maintains a strategic document to guide our decision making and oversight of our portfolio of schools. The current strategic plan will expire in 2017 (see [Appendix 1: PUC-OPCS Strategic Priorities 2012-2017](#)). In order to update our strategic plan, PUC-OPCS will begin a deep dive on the progress of our goals in 2016 in order to develop new goals by the end of 2017. This will be accomplished via meetings with stakeholders, internal evaluations, and engaging with our schools ([Appendix 14: Strategic Plan Update 2017-2022](#)). The new strategic plan will take PUC-OPCS through the next five years until

2022. Additionally, the Performance Framework functions as a way to identify and then work to address areas for improvement across our portfolio of schools.

External Evaluations:

During the summer of 2014, PUC-OPCS began working with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to complete a formalized authorizer review. This review covered a number of dimensions and was based on significant document submissions, and both internal and external interviews. NACSA evaluators presented the final report to the PUC Board of Directors. PUC-OPCS staff then transformed the recommendations from the report into an abbreviated, improvement work plan. The work plan is reviewed and updated weekly. The entire process lasted approximately 4 months and was highly beneficial for the department. PUC-OPCS will engage in an external review at least once more over the next five years.

Measure A.10 - Authorizer High Quality Authorizing Dissemination: *The authorizer plans to disseminate best authorizing practices and/or assist other authorizers in high quality authorizing.*

Process for Best Practice Engagement with Authorizers:

Pillsbury United Communities – Office of Public Charter Schools (PUC-OPCS) regularly shares best practices with other authorizers and reaches out to offer support and guidance. PUC-OPCS is an active participant in the Minnesota Association of Charter School Authorizers (MACSA). PUC-OPCS typically has 2-3 department staff present at MACSA meetings. During these meetings, PUC-OPCS shares best practices and networks with individual authorizers during topic specific brainstorming and troubleshooting sessions. We host MACSA meetings at the Urban Institute, the space in which PUC-OPCS is located. Additionally, whenever possible PUC commits to having OPCS staff members serve on MACSA committees to assist in agenda preparation, strategic planning, working with stakeholders such as the Minnesota Department of Education, and facilitating various conversations at MACSA meetings.

Nationally, PUC-OPCS is hosting a second National Association of Charter School Authorizer (NACSA) Innovation in Education fellow. For the past two years, PUC-OPCS has been awarded a NACSA fellow. This fellow and the two other Innovation in Education fellows share best practices and assist one another in learning the landscape of charter school authorizing during bi-monthly check-in meetings. Additionally, the fellows assist their placement authorizers with real-time decision making and workflow. The other fellows are placed with St. Thomas University's and Audubon Center for the Northwood's charter authorizing departments. Representatives from each of these authorizers were present at NACSA's offices in Chicago for the fellowship orientation in June 2015 and 2016, where they disseminated knowledge and common best practices amongst each other in a session on authorizing in Minnesota.

PUC-OPCS attends conferences with fellow authorizers (including but not limited to ones hosted by the National Association of Charter Schools & NACSA) engages in leadership conversations about charter school authorizing across the state (Minnesota Association of Charter Schools and MACSA), discusses

best practices internally within PUC-OPCS and disseminates information across the nation with other authorizers/ charter school operators/ and charter schools as applicable.

In 2016, PUC-OPCS co-wrote a white paper on a turnaround process with The School Leadership Project upon one of our schools (see “Community Driven Change: An Idea Whose Time Has Come”, found on PUC – OPCS’ website - <https://www.puc-mn.org/impact-areas/education/office-public-charter-schools/resources-and-publications>). The paper was shared with authorizers, community organizations, and other interested parties at two presentations and through distribution of the publication. The presentations included a panel of participants from PUC-OPCS, The School Leadership Project, LoveWorks Academy's Board of Directors, and Distinctive Schools. Subsequently, other authorizers in Minnesota are pursuing similar approaches with their schools. PUC-OPCS will continue to share our innovations, successes, and important learnings with the authorizing community at large through research, white papers, hosting panels, facilitating conversations, and dedicating time for crucial conversations.

Measure A.11 - Authorizer Compliance to Responsibilities Stated in

Statute: *The authorizer intends to comply with reporting, submissions and deadlines set forth in Minnesota Statute.*

Process for Deadline Compliance:

Pillsbury United Communities – Office of Public Charter Schools (PUC-OPCS) complies with reporting, submissions, and deadlines set forth by Minnesota statute, including the income and expenditures reporting, authorizer annual report, and required trainings. Improvement in this area has been identified as an important strategy (see [Appendix 1: PUC-OPCS Strategic Priorities 2012-2017](#)) and there are three main ways in which our systems and processes support on-time submission.

First, maintaining adequate staff capacity and a strategic organizational structure for our portfolio are key strategies (see [measure A.5](#) and [Appendix 4: PUC-OPCS Organization Chart](#)). Additionally, PUC-OPCS structure supports on-time submission of documents as the team's duties become more specialized.

Second, PUC-OPCS meets regularly to attend to business and address important upcoming deadlines on a weekly work plan (see [Appendix 15: Weekly PUC-OPCS Meeting Template](#)).

Third, PUC-OPCS maintains an updated calendar of deadlines and creates work plans for large submissions.

These three processes have led to successful submissions and will effectively support PUC-OPCS' efforts in the future.