



**TO:** P-12 Education Committee

**FROM:** James N. Baldwin 

**SUBJECT:** Charter Schools: Initial Applications Authorized by the Board of Regents

**DATE:** November 4, 2021

**AUTHORIZATION(S):** 

**SUMMARY**

**Issue for Decision**

Should the Board of Regents consider, approve, and issue an initial charter and provisional charter for the following proposed charter school as recommended by the Commissioner and Department staff?

1. **Innova Girls Academy Charter School** (proposed to locate in Rochester)

**Reason(s) for Consideration**

Required by State statute.

**Proposed Handling**

This issue will come before the P-12 Education Committee and the Full Board for action at its November 2021 meeting.

**Procedural History**

Under the New York Charter Schools Act of 1998, the Board of Regents is authorized to approve applications for initial charters.

## **Background Information**

For background information on the Charter Cap and Board of Regents Charter Process, see **Attachment C**.

### The 2021-2022 Board of Regents Application Process: Round 1

In the Round 1 application and review process, the Charter School Office received:

- Five applicant groups submitted Letters of Intent by May 3, 2021;
- Three applicant groups were invited to submit a full application by July 15, 2021, and three applicant groups did submit full applications by the deadline;
- Three applicant groups were invited to a Capacity Interview. The interviews were held virtually between September 22-23, 2021; and
- One applicant group is being recommended to the Board of Regents for approval at the November 15-16, 2021 meeting.

A Summary of the 2010-2021 charter school application cycles is included as **Attachment B**. The 2021 RFP timeline for applicants seeking to establish new charter schools authorized by the Board of Regents is as follows:

<b>2021-2022 Application Cycles**</b>			
<b>Submission Rounds</b>	<b>Letter of Intent</b>	<b>Full Application</b>	<b>Regents Action</b>
Round 1	May 3	July 15	November 15-16*

\* The current items are being presented at the November 15-16, 2021 Regents meeting.

\*\*This timeline is subject to change at the discretion of NYSED and/or the Board of Regents.

The Commissioner and Department staff recommend that the Board of Regents issue an initial charter and provisional charter for the above listed new charter school. The Charter School Application Summary, Findings, and Recommendation for the proposed new school is included as **Attachment A**. The application for this school is available electronically on the Department's website at <http://www.nysed.gov/charter-schools/starting-new-bor-authorized-charter-school>.

## **Related Regents Items:**

<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/1220p12a4.pdf>

## **Recommendation**

VOTED: That the Regents find that: (1) the proposed charter school meets the requirements set out in Article 56 of the Education Law, and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations; (2) the applicant can demonstrate the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner; (3) granting the application is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes set out in subdivision two of section twenty-eight hundred fifty of Article 56 of the Education Law; and (4) granting the application will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school, and the Board of Regents therefore approves and issues a charter and provisional charter to **Innova Girls Academy Charter School**, for a term of five years in accordance with §2851(2)(p) of the Education Law.

## **Timetable for Implementation**

The Regents action is effective immediately.

Attachments



# New York State Education Department Charter School Office

## Charter School Application Summary, Findings, and Recommendation

Application in response to the New York State Education Department  
2021 Round 1 Request for Proposals  
to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents  
to establish the proposed:

**INNOVA GIRLS ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL**

November 2021

**Table 1: Summary of the Proposed School**

<b>Name of Charter School</b>	Innova Girls Academy Charter School
<b>Lead Applicant(s)</b>	Lindsay Swanson
<b>District of Location</b>	Rochester City School District <sup>1</sup>
<b>Anticipated Opening Date</b>	Fall 2022
<b>Projected Charter Term</b>	July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2027
<b>Management Company</b>	None
<b>Facility</b>	Private space
<b>Projected Enrollment and Grade Span during Charter Term</b>	Year 1 (SY 2022-2023): K-2 / 104 Students Year 2 (SY 2023-2024-): K-3 / 156 Students Year 3 (SY 2024-2925): K-4 / 208 Students Year 4 (SY 2025-2026): K-5 / 260 Students Year 5 (SY 2026-2027): K-6 / 312 Students
<b>Mission Statement</b>	In an inclusive school community focused on STEAM, Innova Girls Academy Charter School empowers girls in K-Grade 6 to excel as innovative leaders and confident problem-solvers.
<b>Link to Full Application</b>	<a href="http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/charter-schools/innovagirls2021redacted.pdf">http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/charter-schools/innovagirls2021redacted.pdf</a>

---

<sup>1</sup> Based on data from the 2019-2020 school year, 20% of students residing in the Rochester City School District are enrolled in a charter school.

**Summary of New School Application RFP Ratings:**

<b>Innova Girls Academy Charter School</b>	<b>Average Rating</b>
<b>OVERALL APPLICATION RATINGS</b>	
SECTION I: Mission, Key Design Elements, and Community	Meets
SECTION II: Education Plan	Meets
SECTION III: Organization and Fiscal Plan	Meets
<b>Overall Application Rating</b>	Meets
<b>FINAL AVERAGE RATING OF APPLICATION (If Meets, group advances to a Capacity Interview)</b>	Meets
<b>CAPACITY INTERVIEW METRICS AND RATINGS</b>	
Founding Group and Board Representation	Meets
Skill	Meets
Will	Meets
Capacity	Meets
Knowledge of Application and Ability to Address Questions	Meets
Governance	Meets
Readiness to Launch	Meets
English Language Learners (ELLs)	Meets
Students with Disabilities (SWDs)	Meets
<b>FINAL AVERAGE RATING OF APPLICATION (If Meets, group advances to a Capacity Interview)</b>	Meets

Rating Definitions	
Does Not Meet the Standard	The response lacks meaningful detail; demonstrates lack of preparation; or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the applicant’s understanding of the issue in concept and/or ability to meet the requirement in practice.
Approaches	The response addresses most of the selection criteria but lacks some meaningful detail and requires important additional information to be reasonably comprehensive.
Meets	The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues and indicates capacity to open and operate a quality charter school. It addresses the topic with specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation and presents a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate.

Innova Girls Academy Charter School (IGACS) proposes a STEAM-focused curriculum designed to empower girls to excel as innovative leaders and confident problem-solvers, through a unique partnership with the Girl Scouts of Western New York. All girls who attend IGACS will participate daily in Girl Scouts activities including leadership development, STEAM exploration, and sisterhood programming in an educational environment that fosters the creativity, curiosity, and leadership that each student uniquely possesses.

## Key Design Elements

The key design elements for Innova Girls Academy Charter School are:

- **First Key Design Element – Robust STEAM Curriculum.** The founding applicant group believes every girl has the potential to be a pioneering problem-solver. The school will ensure that girls have access to a robust STEAM curriculum, to prepare them to participate as innovators in the 21st century. Starting in Kindergarten, all students will have daily access to girl-centered, foundational STEAM curriculum through Science and Computational Thinking classes developed by the Girl Scouts of Western New York (GSWNY). By partnering with GSWNY, the school will empower girls to see themselves as leaders who will learn and be empowered to leverage STEAM skills to implement innovative solutions to problems that impact their communities.
- **Second Key Design Element – All-Girls Setting and Leadership Development.** The school’s all-girls setting will affirm, develop, and empower young women to thrive as leaders in a culture of sisterhood. The school culture will celebrate student growth and focus on the development of each student as a self-regulated, life-long learner. The school will utilize the Girl Scouts Leadership programming and a social-emotional learning framework in daily advisory periods to ensure that students are supported with character development. Teachers will be trained in instructional techniques to increase student voice, to develop the mindsets of the school’s girls in taking academic risks.
- **Third Key Design Element – Strong Academic Foundation Fostering Curiosity and Creativity.** For Rochester girls to excel as the leaders of tomorrow, the school will provide high-quality instruction paired with a challenging and engaging curriculum with real-world application. The school will utilize college preparatory curriculum to support development of academic excellence in all students. The school’s workshop model for literacy and math will ensure that students have daily time to target foundational skills, while science, STEAM, and history classes will push students to apply those skills innovatively. All teachers will be provided with curriculum that is aligned with NYS standards. Through challenging assignments, students will develop the confidence needed to be successful.
- **Fourth Key Design Element – Data-Driven Decision-Making So Students Thrive.** Instructional leaders and teachers will use data on a daily basis to inform instruction and other decisions. The school’s co-teaching model will allow for small group instruction across all content areas. These groups, developed based on student mastery data, will be used to provide differentiated instruction to drive student growth and achievement. Daily interventions through the school’s workshop courses and tutoring blocks will allow teachers to be responsive to student needs. The school plans to develop an individualized approach to social-emotional learning supports that teaches students the skills needed to thrive in any setting.
- **Fifth Key Design Element – Professional Development and Educational Technology to Support Teachers as Leaders Who Inspire Excellence.** Through weekly professional development opportunities that foster pedagogical growth and collaboration, teachers will develop as leaders. Teachers will engage in over 300 hours of professional development opportunities focused on the best teaching practices for all-girls educational setting. Teachers will be empowered to be responsive to the needs of their students by leveraging data and educational technology. The school plans to have a longer school day which

extends the time and focus on core subjects to allow for the maximum development of students and teachers.

- **Sixth Key Design Element and Priority Design Aligned with Regents Strategic Priorities – Powerful Partnerships.** First, partnership with the families is crucial to the school’s mission. Using the New Teacher Project’s framework for parent engagement, Innova Girls Academy Charter School supports families’ understanding of what their girl needs to master each year to “meet her goal of being prepared for college, career, entrepreneurship, and service to the community” and provides parents with information on how to support their child towards reaching her goals. The school will communicate frequently with families to celebrate student work and share plans for continued student growth. Second, the school’s partnership with the Girl Scouts of Western New York will allow the school to offer groundbreaking programs for our students. Third, the school’s collaboration with Young Women’s College Prep Charter School will allow IGACS to offer its elementary girls a cohesive K-12 option.

### **Education Plan**

In proposing a STEAM-integrated school for girls, the applicant group’s educational philosophy centers on the reality that, despite initiatives and increases in funding for women in STEAM, only a fraction of girls and women continue to pursue STEAM degrees and careers. Innova Girls Academy Charter School seeks to inspire girls to see their own potential and become confident and innovative leaders, life-long learners, and problem-solvers making change in their communities and the global society. This work begins with remediating current educational gaps in literacy and math by providing access to a rigorous on-grade-level curriculum with robust individualized supports, to ensure students have strong STEAM foundations. IGACS’s educational program will demonstrate to students that STEAM skills can be used to solve problems and that future careers in STEAM can align with their desire to make the world a better place. Through programming offered through a partnership with the Girl Scouts, the school will integrate project-based learning into its science and computational thinking classes. Through hands-on Girl Scout badge work, girls will be exposed to and encouraged to try new things and develop skills.

For example, kindergarten and Grade 1 students will learn about mechanical engineering by designing and building a model car, exploring friction, and learning how to design and test new things. Grades 2 and 3 students will continue to grow their knowledge of mechanical engineering by learning about how design can affect the speed, as they build their own racetrack and engage in skill-integrated tasked-based assessments to deepen their understanding of design. Girls will then take the concepts they have learned and the skills they have developed through their Girl Scout badge work and take action to address an issue they see in their community. Students will explore how engineers use design thinking to solve problems and then plan their own service project to address an issue they see in their community. For instance, students might identify the issue that communities could conserve more water if there were a way to collect rainwater. They will brainstorm and design rain collection devices for home/school. While increasing engagement, regularly devoting time to problem solving positively impacts a student’s academic self-concept and self-efficacy. Teachers across all subjects will incorporate opportunities for cross-curricular integration.

The Girl Scouts STEAM programs result in key benefits for girls, including increased interest, skills, and knowledge, stronger confidence around STEAM, and a decrease in STEAM stereotypes. Students will engage in leadership development through daily advisory lessons utilizing curriculum from the Girl Scouts. For example, kindergarten students will complete the Daisy badge “Courageous and Strong” where they will hear stories of women who have exemplified these characteristics. Students will have the opportunity to exercise their leadership in class through structured play and hands-on learning experiences that help students practice skills that are crucial for success as life-long learners.

IGACS will provide student access to on- or above-grade-level work every day, celebrating effort and academic risk-taking to help students persevere through challenging courses that set them up for rigorous academic achievement. Teachers will have access to curriculum that is vetted for alignment to grade-level State standards and will receive regular professional development to ensure high-quality delivery of this curriculum. Every grade-level teaching team will be comprised of a general education teacher, a Special Education (SPED) teacher, a math specialist, and an English language arts (ELA) specialist. The general education teacher and SPED teacher will each be assigned a cohort of 26 students whom they spend most of their day teaching. The math specialist and ELA specialist will each teach both cohorts in the grade level. This organization of teaching staff will allow for co-teaching and for teachers to become experts in the content area that they teach. Content teams (math or ELA) will meet weekly to review student data, to consider opportunities for vertical alignment across grade levels, and to share content-specific pedagogical strategies. Teachers will also meet in grade-level teams to review student data across content areas and to share strategies for strong behavior management. Grade-level teams will focus on horizontal alignment of content and teaching strategies. Each week, teachers will analyze data to determine student understanding. Based on student mastery, teachers will tailor instruction to remediate and push further academic growth.

Readers, Writers, and Mathematicians Workshops will offer daily opportunities for data to be used in individualized instruction. Data from exit tickets, formal assessments, such as NWEA, and informal class assessments will be used to create small groups that meet to review and remediate skills, to quickly bring students to grade-level mastery. Through research-based intervention, progress monitoring, and data-driven instruction, teachers will strategically guide students to gain the skills that they must master to become fluent readers. Classrooms of 26, with two teachers for the majority of classes, will split into small group instruction to further facilitate the time that students spend working on standards-aligned tasks with scaffolded supports. Educational technology will be employed to help teachers deliver differentiated and individualized instruction. All students in all grades will have a Chromebook, which helps students develop their hand-eye coordination and improve their capacity for visual attention. Teachers will utilize the technology to assign differentiated work, to provide more individualized instruction during guided reading groups and math intervention.

### **School culture**

IGACS believes that it is the ethical responsibility of a school to provide character education for the success of all students. At this school, character education will be grounded in the practices of self-regulated learning and the school’s **CREATE** (Curious, Resourceful, Empathetic,

Accountable, Tenacious, and Enthusiastic) core values, thereby empowering students to be successful life-long learners who are committed to the betterment of their communities. Character education will take place in advisory lessons using programming from the Girl Scouts. Character development will also happen in each class periods, as teachers utilize common language around the CREATE core values to praise student behavior. Similarly, teachers will model the habits of strong, self-regulated learning through their instructional approach, expectations of students, and assignments for students. IGACS will equip all scholars with the academic skills and problem-solving mindsets necessary to excel in the college of their choice and graduate as innovative leaders to make change in their communities. To that goal, students will be seen, heard, supported, and affirmed as they develop their individual identities as leaders, life-long learners, and problem solvers. Three frameworks support this culture and climate of excellence at IGACS: 1) CREATE Core Values; 2) Social Emotional Learning Framework (SELF), and 3) Self-Regulated Learning Practices.

### **Special Populations and Related Services**

The school will create the Student Supports Team (SST). This team will work with classroom teachers and, using data, help to determine which students need additional academic, behavioral, or attendance supports. Together, individualized plans will be developed to support all students. One data point used for possible academic intervention will be completed prior to the beginning of the school year: In order to determine reading skills and proficiency, IGACS will assess students' reading level using the STEP Assessment. Students who test significantly below grade level will be engaged in daily small group interventions which may include the Wilson Reading System. Accommodations and modifications will be developed by the Student Supports Team to ensure access to content and skill development for students who are below grade level, students with disabilities (SWDs), English Language Learners (ELLs), and Economically Disadvantaged (ED) students. General Education, Special Education (SPED), and ELL teachers will collaborate to deliver high-quality instruction to all learners and to provide accommodations, modifications, and scaffolds to ensure that all students are able to access content.

All student schedules will include two review blocks through Readers and Writers Workshop and Mathematicians Workshop, to facilitate students work in small groups based on level of mastery. All students will engage in daily advisory lessons that are developed based on the Girl Scouts programming and focus on the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) development of girls, with an emphasis on developing confidence, collaboration, and sisterhood.

### ***Students with Disabilities***

To provide a low student-to-teacher ratio and small group instruction, each ELA and math class will be co-taught. Co-teaching has been found to be an effective method for supporting all students, and students with special education needs and English language arts in particular. It allows for students to have more opportunities to actively participate. Following the "Blueprint for Improved Results for Students with Disabilities," IGACS will ensure that, when appropriate, all students are able to learn in the general education classroom and in co-taught classrooms where they will have access to a supportive learning environment with scaffolded supports in place for academic achievement. SPED teachers will coordinate pull-out groups for additional small group instruction and remediation of skills based on the analysis of data.

### ***English Language Learners***

IGACS has developed an English as a New Language (ENL) program designed to ensure equitable ELL access to all instruction and activities. The school will incorporate the best practices of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) to ensure that students are able to stay immersed in the traditional classroom, but also have access to additional supports in their respective home language to increase comprehension.

The school will implement a two-teacher model, with a general education teacher and an ELL specialist to directly support the ENL program. The ELL Specialist will push into classrooms during Readers and Writers Workshop to provide small group literacy instruction. The school will also incorporate a Structured English Immersion design, to ensure that students are not separated from their peers and that high expectations for academic excellence are maintained. With additional time for literacy instruction and supports, ELLs will have opportunities to develop their reading, writing, and speaking skills in English across content areas.

With leadership from the Dean of Student Supports, the ELL Specialist will prepare individualized plans, which will include specific supports for students with Interrupted Formal Education, Long Term ELLs, Newcomers, ELLs with Disabilities, and Former ELLs. For example, the school will provide Newcomers and Students with Interrupted Formal Education with the supports and resources needed to assist in their transition into a U.S. classroom (i.e., introductions to basic school activities and skills along with community resources for immigrant families). To support students who may be both ELLs and SWDs, the ELL Specialist and SPED teachers work together to align the supports that are being provided across classrooms for students. To support Former ELLs, the school will follow the program requirements established by the Board of Regents in Part 154 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education and carefully continue to monitor student data to identify the most appropriate services.

Teachers will receive training on best practices and techniques that can be used in the classroom to support ELLs, beginning with a focus on cultivating relationships and celebrating the opportunity for students to learn a second (or third, fourth, etc.) language. Teachers will incorporate language skill development across the curriculum so that language skills are developed in content rich academic settings. Teachers will receive professional development to incorporate the use of multiple modalities throughout their lessons, providing opportunities for writing, speaking, drawing, and listening in their class period, thus providing ELLs with more opportunities for active engagement. Teachers will leverage students' home language to advance their literacy development across content areas by increasing opportunities to translate key vocabulary words, to increase depth of student understanding. Additionally, at-home, and independent reading will be encouraged in students' home language.

### ***Economically Disadvantaged Students***

IGACS anticipates that 90% or more of its students' families will be economically disadvantaged. Currently, in Rochester, the largest group of individuals living below the poverty line are young women, ages 18-24. IGACS is designed to change the narrative for young women in Rochester. Given the large number of students living in extreme poverty, the school anticipates that the students will have experienced trauma. The school will develop trauma-informed teaching practices following the "Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators," which is a framework developed

by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. During year one of operation, the school will hire a full-time social worker to lead this initiative and support the school community. All teachers will receive professional development in Trauma-Informed Instruction. Additionally, economically disadvantaged students will benefit from the school's co-teaching model, which allows for the provision of additional supports. The Readers and Writers Workshop will also benefit students who are economically disadvantaged, through the use of teacher-led mini lessons and opportunities to practice specific skills during small group instruction and independent work time.

### **Recruitment and Retention**

IGACS anticipates that its female elementary student enrollment will be comparable demographically to female elementary student enrollment in Rochester City School District. The female student population will largely be African American and/or Latina and economically disadvantaged; 22% will be SWDs; and 15% will be ELLs.

The school will partner with community organizations such as The Girl Scouts of Western New York, National Coalition of Girls' Schools, the City of Rochester Libraries and Recreation Centers, Rochester YMCAs, Action for a Better Community, Cameron House Ministries, Catholic Family Services, Rochester Refugee Resettlement Services, and local Head Starts and daycares to recruit students. The school will distribute flyers, host information sessions, attend community events, and share information about the school online through the school's website and social media pages. All marketing materials will be available in English and Spanish, and the school will seek to hire staff who are fluent in Spanish to assist in recruitment and communication with families. Information will be provided about supports available to ELL students, to ensure that parents understand that all students, regardless of home language, are welcome and encouraged to enroll their youngsters. Information will also be available across multiple platforms, digital and paper, to ensure economic status does not impact enrollment.

Through strong family partnerships, the school plans to have open communication with all stakeholder groups and seek their feedback regularly. The school will employ two SPED teachers and a director of student supports in the first year, adding one SPED teacher each year thereafter. The school plans to hire one NYS certified English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher initially, and another certified ESOL teacher in year 3. These teachers will push into classrooms during literacy periods, to support ELLs in achieving English proficiency. They will utilize the practices of SIOP to ensure that students are able to stay immersed in the traditional classroom, but also have access to additional supports in their home language to increase comprehension. All core subjects will be co-taught, allowing for additional support for all students. Acknowledging that many incoming students are likely to have experienced poverty-induced trauma, all teachers will be trained in Trauma-Informed Instruction. The school will host multiple opportunities for parents and guardians to engage monthly with community partners such as GSWNY, Compeer Partners, and the Parent Leadership Training Institute, to support parents and student learning.

## Community Outreach

Members of the applicant group have strong and personal connections to the Rochester community. The applicant group used a variety of approaches to reach parents, families, and community organizations in Rochester area, utilizing social media quite effectively during initial months of the COVID-19 pandemic. The applicant group developed an active Instagram and Facebook presence with a total of over 1,002 individual followers. The Facebook pages allowed the applicant group to share more information about the school, advertise events, and seek feedback from the school community. Their posts have reached over 7,000 individuals. Since launching in November 2019, the website (<https://www.innovagirlsacademy.org/>) developed for the proposed school has more than 2,300 unique viewers.

The applicant group distributed over 800 copies of a flyer throughout Rochester; collected 350 surveys; hosted 10 virtual public meetings; hosted 5 Community Focus Groups and one Community Meet and Greet, as well as participated in one speaking event. From all events, the applicant group collected meaningful feedback from parents, which informed the proposed charter school application and resulted in the guardians with age-eligible students expressing interest in enrolling their daughters in the proposed school's inaugural classes of Kindergarten and Grade 1 students.

During the pandemic, the applicant group members organized a set of online educational free resources for families to use in a daily suggested schedule and hosted a Parent Webinar to review these materials. For two weeks, the group hosted STEAM Office Hours for families to ask STEAM-related questions. Subsequently, the applicant group began hosting free, online coding classes for students in K-Grade12 to more than 200 students throughout the school year. These courses were hosted in collaboration with the Girls Scouts of Western New York.

## School Governance and Leadership

The Board of Trustees includes the following individuals:

<b>Proposed Board Members</b>	<b>Proposed Role on Board</b>	<b>City/Town of Residence</b>
Jonathan Nwagbaraocha	Board Chair	Rochester
Kyle Banks	Treasurer	Rochester
Veronica Vargas	Secretary	Rochester
CaTyra Pollard	Trustee	Rochester
Cassie Fields	Trustee	Rochester

## Facility

The applicant group has developed a Facilities Task Force to investigate and procure a safe, affordable space in a private facility in the city of Rochester, easily accessible by public transportation, and suitable for at least the first two years of the initial charter term. Ideally, the applicant group seeks to secure a lease in which the school could grow to its full capacity by the end of the initial charter term.

A specific school facility has not been identified; however, four possible locations have been investigated. The school’s task force has identified four possible locations in Rochester which include: 1) a closed mall; 2) a former divinity school, 3) a former charter school facility; 4) a warehouse/office space. As the Task Force evaluates each space, cost, and extent of renovations along with location and proximity to Rochester are considered.

**Projected Fiscal and Programmatic Impact on District of Location**

The applicant group provided an analysis of the fiscal and programmatic impact of the proposed school on public and non-public schools in the Rochester City School District, indicating that the fiscal impact of Innova Girls Academy Charter School on the district of location is expected to be nominal.

The New York State Education Department also conducted additional analysis on the projected fiscal impact of the School on its district of location, which is summarized below.

**Table 2: Projected Fiscal Impact Upon District of Location, 2022-2023 to 2026-2027<sup>2</sup>**

Year	Number of Students Enrolled in Charter School Per Year <sup>3</sup>	Charter School Basic Tuition Rate <sup>4</sup>	Total Charter School Basic Tuition	Estimated District Special Education Payment <sup>5</sup>	Total District General Fund Budget <sup>6</sup>	Percent of District Budget
2022-23	104	\$13,785	\$1,433,640	\$92,789	\$979,753,857	0.16%
2023-24	156	\$13,785	\$2,150,460	\$139,184	\$979,753,857	0.23%
2024-25	208	\$13,785	\$2,867,280	\$185,578	\$979,753,857	0.31%
2025-26	260	\$13,785	\$3,584,100	\$225,345	\$979,753,857	0.39%
2026-27	312	\$13,785	\$4,300,920	\$271,740	\$979,753,857	0.47%

The calculations above assume charter school basic tuition rates in the charter period (2022-2023 through 2026-2027) based on a trend analysis calculated by the Charter School Office and approved by the Department’s State Aid Office. In order to conservatively avoid underestimating the fiscal impact that the charter school will have on the district going forward, the Department is assuming no growth in the district’s budget during the duration of the school’s charter.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> In order to conservatively estimate the fiscal impact upon the district of location, maximum enrollment figures for each year were used.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Innova Girls Academy Charter School Application

<sup>4</sup> Source: Education Law §2856(1)(a)(iii) and NYS Education Department Office of State Aid Charter School Basic Tuition Rate Analysis

<sup>5</sup> Based on special education classification rate calculation trends of Rochester area charter schools.

<sup>6</sup> Source: Total District General Fund Budget: \$979,753,857 is from the 2021-2022 Superintendent’s Proposed Budget at [https://go.boarddocs.com/ny/rochny/Board.nsf/files/BZDV4V7EF9C2/\\$file/RCSD%20Budget%20Presentation%203.23.21.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/ny/rochny/Board.nsf/files/BZDV4V7EF9C2/$file/RCSD%20Budget%20Presentation%203.23.21.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Additional notes: While the school has included other federal grants and/or funds that may flow through the district to be received by the school in its proposed budget, this analysis does not account for these sources of potential revenue, nor does it include the value of certain services (e.g. transportation) that the district is required to provide the charter school. However, the analysis also does not account for district per-pupil expense and overall resource savings that are likely to result from a reduction in the number of students attending district public schools as a result of students attending nonpublic schools located in the school district.

It should be noted that, given the nature of district-based per-pupil funding, the estimates made by the Department in conducting this analysis are subject to unpredictable financial fluctuations. For forecasting purposes, the fiscal impact of this charter school on the district in which it will be located assumes that:

- There will be no fluctuation in the grade levels served by existing charter schools over the course of the charter term;
- The charter school will be able to meet its projected maximum enrollment;
- All students will come from the district of location; and
- All students will attend every day for a 1.0 FTE.

The specifics of the school’s enrollment composition are still unavailable; however, the Department acknowledges that the programmatic and fiscal impact of the proposed charter school on other public and private schools in the same area will also be influenced by the proportion of charter school enrollees that would have attended a same-district public or private school had it not been for the presence of this charter school.

**Table 3: 2020-2021 Demographic Detail for Proposed District of Location:  
Rochester City School District<sup>8</sup>**

	Total District Enrollment: <u>23,359</u>	
All Students	23,359	
Students with Disabilities	4,976	21%
English Language Learners	3,793	16%
Economically Disadvantaged	20,633	88%

<sup>8</sup> Source: 2020-2021 Final District Level Enrollment Data

**Table 4: 2018-2019 Elementary/Middle School Academic Proficiency Rates on NYS Assessments Based on Grade Configurations for Proposed School<sup>9</sup>**

Assessments	Rochester City School District Proficiency	NYS Proficiency
<i>ELA Grades 3-6 Aggregate</i>	14%	46%
<i>Grade 3 ELA</i>	18%	52%
<i>Grade 4 ELA</i>	14%	48%
<i>Grade 5 ELA</i>	11%	38%
<i>Grade 6 ELA</i>	14%	47%
<i>Math Grades 3-6 Aggregate</i>	15%	50%
<i>Grade 3 Math</i>	22%	55%
<i>Grade 4 Math</i>	14%	50%
<i>Grade 5 Math</i>	12%	46%
<i>Grade 6 Math</i>	12%	47%

### Technical Modifications

For applicant groups recommended to the Board of Regents for authorization, NYSED may require that applicant groups make technical modifications to their applications following the Capacity Interviews. Such requests are made to technically align the information contained in the full application with the NYSED initial charter agreement template and/or comply with relevant laws and regulations. Other than modifications of a technical nature, as determined by the Department, applicants are not given the opportunity to substantially revise or augment their application once it has been submitted. The applicant group was sent technical modifications by NYSED. The applicant group agreed to these technical modifications, and, if the school is approved by the Board of Regents, its charter shall incorporate such changes.

### Summary of Public Comment

As required by the Charter Schools Act, the Rochester City School District conducted a public hearing on October 12, 2021, to solicit comments from the community concerning the proposed Innova Girls Academy Charter School. One member of the community was present and spoke in favor of the proposed application. No comments or letters in support of or in opposition to the application were submitted.

<sup>9</sup> Source: data.nysed.gov

## Findings

Based on the comprehensive review of the application and of the applicant, founding group, and proposed board of trustees, the Department makes the following findings:

1. The charter school described in the application meets the requirements of Article 56 of the Education Law (as amended) and other applicable laws, rules, and regulations.<sup>10</sup> This finding is based on the following, among other things:
  - The applicant has included in the application the information required by Education Law §2851(2).
  - The proposed charter school would meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets, as prescribed by the NYS Board of Regents,<sup>11</sup> of students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the federal free and reduced price lunch program as required by Education Law §2852(9-a)(b)(i).
  - The applicant has conducted public outreach to solicit community input regarding the proposed charter school and to address comments received from the impacted community concerning the educational and programmatic needs of students in conformity with Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(ii).
2. The applicant has demonstrated the ability to operate the proposed charter school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner.<sup>12</sup> This finding is based on the following, among other things:
  - i. The presentation in the application of a sound description of key features that are core to the school's overall design, and which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department's RFP in the areas of mission; key design elements; enrollment, recruitment, and retention; and community to be served.
  - ii. The presentation in the application of a sound educational plan, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department's RFP in the areas of achievement goals; school schedule and calendar; curriculum and instruction; assessment; school culture and climate; and special student populations and related services.
  - iii. The presentation in the application of a sound organizational and fiscal plan, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department's RFP in the areas of founding group capacity; board of trustees and governance; management and staffing; evaluation; professional development; facilities; insurance; health, food, and transportation services; family and community involvement; financial management; budget and cash flow; pre-opening plan; and dissolution plan.

---

<sup>10</sup> Education Law §2852(2)(a).

<sup>11</sup> Note, the data upon which to base the enrollment and retention targets mandated by the amendments to the Act was not available at the time the statute mandated the RFP be issued. As a result, the Department evaluated the plans for student enrollment, recruitment, and retention plans of each class of student referenced in the amendments to the Act such that the Department could make the determination that the applicant would meet or exceed the enrollment and retention targets when developed. During the first year of the charter term, the Department will develop such targets and incorporate these targets into the school's charter agreement performance expectations.

<sup>12</sup> Education Law §2852(2)(b).

- iv. An understanding of the New York State Charter Schools Act, and the skill, will and capacity to successfully launch and operate a high-quality public charter school.
3. Granting the proposed charter is likely to improve student learning and achievement, will materially further the purposes of the Act<sup>13</sup> and will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school.<sup>14</sup> This finding is based on the totality of the information presented in the application and during the application review process, as summarized in this document.

---

<sup>13</sup> Education Law §2852(2)(c).

<sup>14</sup> As applicable pursuant to Education Law §2852(2)(d).

**SUMMARY OF 2010-2021 CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION CYCLES**

<b>Regents RFP Cycle</b>	<b>Letters of Intent Submitted</b>	<b>Full Applications Submitted</b>	<b>Charters Issued by Board of Regents (# in NYC)<sup>15</sup></b>
2010	39	35 prospectuses were submitted; 16 applicants were invited to submit full applications <b>15 full applications were submitted</b>	Regents: 7(5)
2011	100	80 prospectuses were submitted; 37 applicants were invited to submit full applications <b>36 full applications were submitted</b>	Regents: 9(7)
2012 Round 1	30	20 applicants were invited to submit full applications <b>14 full applications were submitted</b>	Regents: 3(3)
2012 Round 2	54	37 applicants were invited to submit full applications <b>25 full applications were submitted</b>	Regents: 10(8)
2012 Round 3	24	24 applicants were invited to submit full applications <b>12 full applications were submitted</b>	Regents: 0(0)
2013	99	60 applicants were invited to submit full applications <b>55 full applications were submitted</b>	Regents: 8(6)
2014 Round 1	31	15 applicants were invited to submit full applications in either Round 1 or Round 2 <b>11 full applications were submitted for review</b>	Regents: 2(1)
2014 Round 2	51	18 applicants were invited to submit full applications <b>15 full applications were submitted for review</b>	Regents: 3(3)

<sup>15</sup> The 2015 legislative amendments to the Charter Schools Act takes the cap remaining under the 2007 and 2010 legislation (159) and provides for the reissuance of 22 charters, for a total of 181 charters to be used by either the Regents or SUNY. Chapter 20 of the Laws of 2015 imposed a limit of 50 new charters in New York City.

2015 Round 1	38	15 applicants were invited to submit full applications <b>15 full applications were submitted for review</b>	Regents: 0(0)
2015 Round 2	51	17 applicants were invited to submit full applications <b>11 full applications were submitted for review</b>	Regents: 3(2)
2015 Round 3	N/A	Letters of Intent Waived <b>15 full applications were submitted for review</b>	Regents: 1(1)
2016 Round 1 (June)	11	11 applicants were invited to submit full applications <b>11 full applications were submitted for review</b>	Regents: 3(2)
2016 Round 2 (November)	25	15 applicants were invited to submit full applications <b>14 full applications were submitted for review</b>	Regents: 3(2)
2016 Round 2 Continued (December)	25	15 applicants were invited to submit full applications <b>14 full applications were submitted for review</b>	Regents: 1(0)
2017 Round 1 (June)	17	13 applicants were invited to submit full applications <b>10 full applications were submitted for review</b>	Regents: 3(3)
2017 Round 2 (November)	28	21 applicants were invited to submit full applications <b>18 full applications were submitted for review</b>	Regents: 5(5)
2018 Round 1 (June)	19	14 applicants were invited to submit full applications <b>11 full applications were submitted for review</b>	Regents: 6(6)
2018 Round 2 (Nov/Dec)	29	23 applicants were invited to submit full applications <b>19 full applications were submitted for review</b>	Regents: 8(7) 7 approved in November; 1 in December
2019 Round 1 Round 1 New York City only (January)	No Letters of Intent Required	<b>5 full applications were submitted for review</b> Cap on the number of charter schools permitted in NYC reached with SUNY Trustees approval of 7 charter applications. Therefore, none	Regents: 0(0)

		of the applications was acted upon	
2019 Round 2 (April)	23	8 applicants were invited to submit full applications <b>8 full applications were submitted for review</b>	Regents: 2(0)
2020 Round 1 (May)	13	7 applicants were invited to submit full applications <b>7 full applications were submitted for review</b>	Regents: 1(0) in December
2021 Round 1 (November)	5	3 applicants were invited to submit full applications <b>3 full applications were submitted for review</b>	Regents: 1(0) NYSED Recommendation at the November 15-16 Board of Regents Meeting

---

**The Charter Cap**

Chapter 101 of the Laws of 2010 increased the cap on the number of charters that can be issued in New York State from 200 to 460. The law also designated the Board of Regents and the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (SUNY) as the authorizers for the additional 260 charters (130 charters to be issued by each, with no more than 57 in New York City) and required that the two chartering entities create competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) processes for applications for the additional 260 charters. The law dictated the timetable for the RFPs that were issued in 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013 and left the timetable for the release of RFPs in subsequent years to be determined by the Board of Regents and SUNY. The 2015 legislative amendment allows 22 charters that have been surrendered, revoked, terminated, or not renewed to be reissued by SUNY or the Board of Regents through an application process, and all of those charters have been expended. Chapter 20 of the Laws of 2015 imposed a limit of fifty new charters in New York City. There are currently no charters available in New York City and 91 charters remain available for issuance outside of New York City. A Charter School Fact Sheet outlining the number of charters issued and those currently remaining as of September 2021 can be found at:

<http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/charter-schools/nyscsfactsheet092821.pdf>

**The Board of Regents Charter Process**

**Phase I – Letter of Intent:**

Each applicant group must submit a letter of intent that provides a brief description of the school mission and design, the proposed student population (including plans to meet enrollment and retention targets), evidence of community outreach efforts and community support, a proposed school district and/or proposed facility, information about the founding group, and anticipated members of the initial board of trustees.

**Phase II – Full Application:**

If the criteria of the Letter of Intent are met, each applicant group whose Letter of Intent was accepted must submit a written application that provides the full design of the proposed school, including instructional model and approach, targeted student population, organizational structure, and financial plan. The Full Application is structured to objectively evaluate the proposed school's educational alignment and operational compliance to the requirements and educational priorities of the Charter Schools Act. Each accepted application is rigorously evaluated through a peer-review process by a three-member expert panel including national consultants, reviewers who are current educators in public schools or universities within New York State and across the nation, and experienced Department staff in the Charter School Office (CSO). The application is also typically reviewed by the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL), and the Office of Special Education (OSE).

Phase III – Capacity Interviews:

Generally, if the Full Application meets the standards of the RFP, each applicable applicant group attends an interview to discuss the application and to demonstrate that they have the will, skill, knowledge, and capacity to successfully launch and operate the proposed school.

Phase IV – Request for Modifications:

Each applicant group makes technical modifications to their applications, as necessary and requested by the Department.

In addition to the above, throughout the chartering process, the Department reviews public comments provided through the Letter of Intent, the Full Application, the formal public hearings (required to be conducted by the school district of location for the proposed school), and through direct communication with the Department’s Charter School Office.

Phase V – Departmental Recommendation:

Recommendations to award new charters are made to the Board of Regents by the Interim Commissioner on behalf of the Department. These recommendations are only given to groups with a strong educational plan, can demonstrate their readiness to launch and operate a highly effective public school, and whose application would have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the proposed charter school. Based on a synthesis of information gathered throughout all stages of the process, the Department presents its recommendations to the Board.